
A special thanks to Robert Leach, MD, former Editor-in-Chief and previous Chair of the AJSM Board for compiling this history of the journal. Dr. Leach served as AOSSM President in 1983-84 and is a member of the AOSSM Hall of Fame.

The history of the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, to some extent, parallels the growth and development of sports medicine as a legitimate medical specialty. It is hard to precisely define when the latter started, but certainly sports medicine as an entity hit the American consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Around that time, some of the early orthopaedic giants got together and decided that there should be an organization dedicated to orthopaedic sports medicine. The first organizational meeting occurred in 1972, with Dr. Don O’Donoghue being elected president, and the first annual meeting of the AOSSM took place in 1973.

The first issue of the *Journal of Sports Medicine* is marked as volume I, number I, September-October, 1972. However, that issue did not arrive in subscribers’ mailboxes until well after that date. It features a cover showing professional football players and a small color insert of the damage sustained by one of them (courtesy of Dr. James Nicholas). The very first article concerned the subluxating patella and was written by Dr. Jack Hughston. In view of much of the history, to follow this appears logical and deserved. There was also a small color atlas of photographs of meniscal problems of the knee taken using an arthroscope (contributed by Dr. James Funk). If one compares that original issue to the present journal, you would be amazed at the progression of our specialty and of our journal. As an example of the old Journal, the lead article in the first issue of 1975 was entitled, “Inferiority of Female Athletes: Myth or Reality?”

How did this Journal get started, and who were the actual progenitors? Unfortunately, many of the principals are now deceased, but I was able to talk with each of them at various times and took notes, which are now passed on here. In addition, I have a number of early letters between the principal founders and minutes of early AOSSM meetings.
Dr William Sinton was an orthopaedic surgeon from Waterbury, Connecticut, who had an interest in sports medicine. He had no academic appointments and had not been active in writing articles, etc. However, he foresaw the growth of sports medicine and believed there was a need for a journal representing the orthopaedic aspect of the specialty. He got together with Benjamin Goode, who was a local publisher and friend, and they together conceived the idea of a sports medicine journal. Sinton was an affable gentleman and knew many of the “movers and shakers” in the field. He approached some and told them what he wanted to do. He was encouraged to go ahead, and enlisted many to be on his first editorial advisory board, which included Jack Hughston as chairman. Others of note on the board included Drs O’Donoghue, Slocum, Reynolds, Ferguson, Blazina, Nicholas, and Ellison. At this point, Goode was the publisher and Sinton’s title was medical director. They used Williams and Wilkins as their printer but Mr Goode did the copy editing. I was told by Sinton and Goode that their first discussions occurred in early 1971, but it took some time for the project to come together.

The first issues in 1972 and 1973 were not particularly noteworthy, and Sinton pushed very hard for the fledgling AOSSM to use his journal as the Society’s publishing organ. The AOSSM was not entranced at first with the idea of using the journal as there were problems, including the fact that only three of the proposed six issues for 1973 were published in that year. During the years 1972 and 1973, the magazine was of regular size, but in 1975, it went to a smaller size format with a yellow and white rather undistinguished cover. Yet, in 1974, it became the official publication of the AOSSM, the United States Ski Association, and the National Ski Patrol—the latter two largely due to the efforts of Dr Arthur Ellison. There continued to be problems with publishing the Journal throughout 1974 to 1975. Williams and Wilkins had major problems receiving the articles from Mr Goode in time to meet publishing deadlines, and there was not a close association between any of the principals involved, as noted in a letter from Mr. Hoover at Williams and Wilkins written to Dr Rockwood that begins, “Dear Chuck!” It appears that Ben Goode literally would not answer letters or calls for months from Williams and Wilkins or Dr Rockwood, who at that time was chair of the Publications Committee of the AOSSM.
In discussions throughout 1974 and 1975, the AOSSM hierarchy wondered if they could buy the publishing rights from Sinton/Goode and take over the journal. Neither of the owners was very happy to give up ownership, but they were stymied a bit because the best source of papers would be from the AOSSM, and if the Society decided to publish its own magazine, the Sinton/Goode journal would likely fail. Because of not meeting deadlines, it was difficult to attract advertisers, and revenues were low. They were in fact losing money. Thus, in the middle of 1976, the Journal of Sports Medicine was purchased for $50,000 by the AOSSM, which promptly changed the name to The American Journal of Sports Medicine. Dr Charles Rockwood was adamant that the name should be changed and pushed this through at the Board of Directors meeting. During this year, the small size format was kept but a bright red cover was added, which gave it much more “pizzazz.” The Society initially did not have enough money to make the purchase and needed a loan, but to obtain this loan, Dr Leslie Bodnar of South Bend had to give his personal guarantee. This certainly put the Society in debt to Dr Bodnar, who was also serving as its secretary.

At that point, the Society had a journal and went about finding an editor, which proved not difficult since Dr Hughston was already on board. Thus, he became the first editor of The American Journal of Sports Medicine—a wise move as it eventually proved. Dr Charles Rockwood was still chair of publications for the AOSSM, and as such, the journal was nominally under his aegis. However, Dr Hughston was “numero uno” for all matters relating to the Journal. This proved fortuitous for the Society since finances and the attraction of papers were first and foremost on everyone’s mind. In 1977, Dr Hughston started the first of many years of subsidizing the Journal from the Hughston Clinic by providing space and journal employees as well as a number of other financial extras. Since the Hughston Clinic had sports medicine fellows from many countries and other parts of the US, he also had a line to possible contributors to the Journal. A review of articles from this era shows the positive effect that the latter had on the articles published.

During the period of 1973 to 1979, titles for Journal personnel seemed to switch more easily than the affections of sports fans. Dr Hughston went from being chairman of the Medical Advisory Board to editor to editor-in-chief. He then became chairman of the
Board of Editors, and finally, again, editor. Dr Rockwood was initially chairman of the Publications Committee of the AOSSM and became chairman of the Board of Editors. Ben Goode started off as publisher, then assumed the role of editor-publisher, and then became editor. Apparently he then felt the need for greater power and became editor-in-chief. Looking at the duplication of some titles, one hopes that no two people held the same title at the same time. Nevertheless, the Journal moved forward, and by 1979 was on firm footing in Columbus, Georgia.

The Journal began slowly trying to build a base—first from members of the AOSSM, which was a small group in those years, and then from those in orthopaedics who would admit they practiced or liked sports medicine. Remember, this was an era when a president of the AAOS could tell a young academic acquaintance that his association with “those fellows,” ie, sports medicine practitioners, would not help his academic or orthopaedic political career. Many members of the Society were in personal conflict as to whether or not they should publish their papers in a sports medicine journal as opposed to JBJS or CORR, which they believed would more likely help their academic careers. They did not mind presenting their papers to the AOSSM, but for some years, it was difficult to get the papers presented at the AOSSM meeting submitted to the Journal as they were supposed to be and as the Society bylaws clearly pointed out. Obtaining these papers was a bone of contention for some years. Dr Hughston appointed a Board of Editors who was to help him review papers, but most of the reviews were done by Dr Hughston and others at the Hughston Clinic. It had been decided during the buyout that, at least for a while, Ben Goode would remain on the letterhead as nominal publisher, but Williams and Wilkins (the printers) were really acting as publisher. Goode did edit some articles, but again, there were major problems for Williams and Wilkins in getting these articles out of his hands and to the printer on time. Dr Sinton was retained as medical advisor for the first 2 years.

Eventually, this tenuous entente fell apart, as Mr Goode had many problems getting issues out on time. In many letters, Dr Rockwood tells of his complete inability to contact Mr Goode at any time. He simply would not answer queries by mail or phone. In 1976, after a year of late issues, the AOSSM decided to make a deal with Williams and Wilkins,
employing them as publishers and copy editors, thus ending Mr Goode's association. (As an aside, to prepare this history, some years ago I phoned Mr Goode at his home and left 10 separate messages. He returned one call to the office late at night saying he could not recall any of the early history and did not want to talk about it.) However, at this point (1977), Dr Hughston was firmly entrenched, and the Journal was running well in Columbus. In 1978, the Journal made a profit of $38,000 but some of the expenses were covered by the Hughston Clinic. An important decision was made around 1979, when Dr Hughston and others believed that the Journal finances should be separate from those of the AOSSM. This decision was approved by the AOSSM. In early 1980, Dr Hughston wrote a letter to me as the newly appointed president of the Board of Trustees asking for recommendations for the new position of treasurer of the Journal. I replied, and a return letter from Dr Hughston to me shows that I recommended Dr Kretzler, who was retiring from that same position with the AOSSM. Dr Hughston thought this was an excellent idea, and Dr Kretzler took over in 1980 as treasurer—a position in which he remained for many years with the resultant immense benefit to the Journal and the Society. The Journal began to build a circulation, and the published articles were substantially better than the first years'. In 1980, we returned to the large-size format but reverted to a yellowish cover. One other item of note was that Lottie Applewhite, a lady with much expertise in editing and helping with journals and who resided in Durham, North Carolina, was proposed as someone to help Dr Hughston. Some members of the Publications Committee felt strongly that she would be a good addition, but this did not work out well for either of the two principals, and she left in 1980. Dr Hughston employed several people to help, but none worked out well for the next several years.

As the Journal was assuming a position of importance within the sports medicine community, people within the Society began to look more closely at the Journal: who should be editor, where it should be located, the finances, and its relationship to the AOSSM. It was decided in 1979 that there would be a Board of Trustees for the Journal, and that the president elect of the AOSSM each year would be the new president of the Board of Trustees. Dr Robert Larson was appointed as first president of the Journal trustees. The Society decided also that there should be an overview of the Journal, and in 1979, appointed an ad hoc committee composed of the trustee president (Dr Larson), the
head of publications from the AOSSM (Dr J. Feagin), and Dr R. Leach (the latter presumably because he was involved with other medical journals such as being associate editor of CORR and a reviewer for several others). A number of suggestions were made by this committee, including a decision that the presidency of the Journal trustees board had to be stable for a number of years. This could not happen if the incoming Society president became the trustee president each year. At that point, in early 1980, at a trustees meeting, Dr R. Leach was appointed as president of the Board of Trustees for a period of 5 years. However, the first full meeting of trustees that he presided over did not take place until 1981. Following a meeting between Drs Hughston and Leach during the AAOS meeting in Atlanta in 1980, it was agreed that the best situation for the Journal was to keep it in Columbus, with Dr Hughston as editor. This recommendation was discussed and implemented at the 1980 trustees meeting. The subsequent success, I believe, showed this was a reasonable and prudent decision.

We had made an agreement with Williams and Wilkins for them to continue as publishers/printers, and they would also be the redactors. The work at the Journal increased with increased subscriptions and paper submissions, and Dr Hughston appointed a managing editor, Sharon Sudderth, in 1982. In 1985, Miss Ann Donaldson went from Williams and Wilkins in Baltimore to Columbus, where she became the head copy editor and was to train others in preparation for our self-publishing venture, which was to start in January 1986. Her presence later became a Godsend. In 1989, Donna Tilton, who had been working at the Hughston Clinic, came over to the Journal side, where she assumed copy editing responsibilities. She has continued working until present day (2012).

From 1980 to 1982, the agreement with Williams and Wilkins said that they would share profits with the Journal after the expenses for Williams and Wilkins were taken out but before the expenses for the Journal were accounted for. The new trustees renegotiated this agreement to have expenses for both organizations taken out and then profits shared. This resulted in a substantial increase in profit. With Dr Kretzler firmly in control of finances, the trustees advocated that the editor be paid a salary of $10,000, but even this token payment was initially rejected by Dr Hughston.
With the Journal running smoothly, after a few years, Dr Hughston believed strongly that the Journal should become self-published, which would give the editor better control and increase the financial return. Dr Hughston, Dr Leach, and Sharon researched this extensively, and in 1984, presented the information to the trustees, who agreed after significant discussion and dissent that we should become independent. Our circulation was increasing gradually and we thought we could do better without the “middle man.”

One item of interest occurred in 1983, when Dr Leach told Jim Gallagher of Williams and Wilkins what we were thinking of doing. He replied that “this would be a big mistake for us.” The next day, several of us met with Mr Gallagher who then offered us $500,000 for the rights to the Journal. We refused, and 24 hours later he upped the offer to $650,000. We figured if he thought it was worth that much, we should keep it and self-publish. In 1986, the Journal took that major step and became a self-published entity. We had no problems with self-publishing, and we soon found that the financial return to the Journal was far greater than we had planned. We had already gone well into the black, and in 1985, paid off the loan to the Society that the AOSSM had taken out to buy the Journal in 1976.

One interesting fact from 1984 was that the Arthroscopy Association decided that they wanted to publish a journal. Since much that went on in that field was closely related to sports medicine and there were many crossover members in the two groups, it was suggested that the two groups could combine to put out one journal. Dr Bob Metcalf of Utah was the person who was to be the arthroscopy journal editor, and in 1984, the trustees of our Journal, with Dr Hughston’s approval, agreed to merge the two journals in 1985, planning on the first merged issue to be in 1986. Dr Hughston was to be editor-in-chief and Dr Metcalf to be associate editor. There was disagreement regarding this on the part of several trustees, including Dr Leach, but since Dr Hughston had given his “OK,” plans were made. This entire concept fell apart late in 1985, when Dr Metcalf said he had no idea how hard it was to get a journal going and he could not be ready for at least another year. At the same time, the arthroscopy group began to have second thoughts and wanted their own publication. Frankly, a number on the AJSM side were happy concerning these events, but this separation worked out well for both groups.
Thus, 1986 found us self-publishing; circulation was going up, advertising revenues were increasing, and the Journal was well ensconced in the sports medicine and orthopaedic worlds. A small blip occurred in this year when a well-known sports medicine figure from Europe stood up at a meeting and said that Dr Hughston was too old to be an effective editor and that this sent a bad message to those in Europe who wanted to publish. This was followed by a letter with a more scurrilous message recommending Dr Hughston’s ouster. All on the Board of Trustees forthrightly and emphatically rejected this calumny, and other than personal wounds, the Journal was back on track. Things appeared stable in Columbus with the staff, but unfortunate circumstances appeared that led to the resignation of Sharon Sudderth in 1989. On the plus side, Ann Donaldson, who had a long background in journal publishing, was ready to step in and became the managing editor in 1989. The Journal did not lose a step during this period.

However, during this time, the Board of Directors of the AOSSM and Dr Hughston began to wonder if it was not time for a change in the position of editor. This was clearly another landmark decision since the Journal was so strongly identified with Dr Hughston. The choice fell upon Dr Robert Leach of Boston University. At this point, Drs Hughston and Leach switched positions, with Dr Hughston assuming the mantle of president of the Board of Trustees. The next big decision was whether the Journal office would move to Boston or stay in Columbus. The decision—largely based upon Dr Leach’s wishes—was to move the office to the Boston area. As time has gone on and publishing changed so much into what is referred to as “desktop publishing,” there is no question that the office now could be virtually anywhere, with the editor and copy editors in different cities.

Nevertheless, in the fall of 1990, the Journal with its staff members, including Ann Donaldson and Donna Tilton, moved to the Boston area in Waltham, Massachusetts. Ann and Donna did a yeoman’s job of keeping everything on course, and we easily kept to the strict publishing schedules that had been followed since 1980-1981. During the period of 1988 to 1992, the Journal was accumulating significant financial resources under the stewardship of Dr Kretzler, and as these resources mounted, the Society began to eye the Journal as a more significant source of income. Since 1985 the Journal had contributed
$25,000 per year to the Society and at times funded certain projects for the Society. The financial resources of the Journal continued to be an object of affection for the Society Board of Directors, and as I look back from a position now outside the dealings, I can fully understand that.

Some minor changes and others with larger impacts were made with the move to Massachusetts. We published an editor’s column in each issue, and after several years, a “Current Concepts” presentation was made in each issue. Dr Timothy Foster, as associate editor, with the assistance of Bert Mandelbaum took over this sometimes onerous task. This latter addition was not agreed upon by all members of the Journal trustees but has since proven popular and worthwhile. Advertising revenue was always a significant item, and we seemingly changed our advertising personnel every 2 years with varying degrees of success. During this time, there had been a gradual increase in the number of engineering and basic research articles submitted to the Society Annual Meeting and to the Journal itself. While some viewed this with dismay, worrying about the possibilities of the Journal being less of an immediate asset to the practitioner of sports medicine, it was inevitable and demonstrated how the specialty had progressed. The articles were now showing what practice might be like in 10 years.

The biggest change occurred when after 3 years, Ann Donaldson found the combination of cold winters and being away from family difficult and proposed moving to the Charlottesville, Virginia, area, and she said Donna Tilton would move back to Georgia. The editor found this a difficult concept to grasp but in 1994 we went forward, and with the modern miracles of faxes, good mail delivery, and the computer, it became evident that this could and did work. As our circulation continued to slowly rise, we assumed the role of the journal leader in sports medicine, and articles from all over the world were being published in each issue. We even influenced the JBJS, as they started to publish some sports medicine articles. By this time, the manuscript submission list was such that we could absorb small hits, such as that which the JBJS would inflict.

During the decade from 1988, the Journal published several items that were good for the Journal and for the sports medicine community. In 1988, the AOSSM, in conjunction
with the Journal, published a project on sports injury research. A few years later, the IOC asked us to publish their Third International Olympic Committee Congress on Sports Sciences. Each of these took a great deal of time and effort on the part of the Journal staff to edit and redact, but the results seemed worthwhile. In 1999, the Federation International of Football Association (FIFA) asked us to publish their excellent study on risk factors and incidence of injuries in football players. In this instance, their authors did a good job of getting the papers ready.

With the coming of the new millennium, the question of the Journal going online had to be considered. The positive aspect was that other good journals were doing it, and it appeared the way of the future. It would also make our material available to many people who did not subscribe. On the other hand, it was likely that it would affect our subscription rates adversely, since this is what other journals had experienced. We investigated the possibilities and decided to hook up with the Stanford site servers and were easily online by 2000. It did inevitably affect circulation, but it still appears a necessary move.

In the early years of the 21st century, members of the Board of Directors of the AOSSM thought that there should be some changes in the leadership of the Journal Board of Trustees. After a period of sometimes contentious discussion that included members of both the Board of Directors of the Society and the trustees of the Journal, Dr Hughston was replaced by Dr David Sisk as president of the Journal trustees and Dr Kretzler by Dr Brown. Shortly after this, Dr Leach expressed a wish to retire as editor, and after a vigorous search, Dr Bruce Reider became the editor-in-chief of the Journal in 2002. He remained in Chicago, while the other workers stayed at their respective locales, and the Journal continued to move forward.