Kenneth L. Shropshire, a professor of legal studies and business ethics at the Wharton School and director of the Wharton Sports Business Initiative, was planning to write an update of a book he had previously penned about race and sports in America when the sports world was engulfed by a series of controversies: The NFL/Ray Rice domestic violence scandal, alleged bullying on the Miami Dolphins, college athletes challenging their status as amateurs, the debate regarding the Washington Redskins’ team name, and the drama between the NBA and former Clippers owner Donald Sterling.

Shropshire has consulted for years with the NFL, MLB, the NCAA, and other top sports organizations, owners, executives, and athletes on issues related to diversity, inclusion, equality, and respect. In his book, “Sport Matters: Leadership, Power, and the Quest for Respect in Sports,” published by Wharton Digital Press, he focuses on the unique leadership challenge to embrace and deliver these principles in a real and tangible way within the sports industry.

The book is intended to be a snapshot of where America stands in its societal journey by focusing on key sports power issues. It also seeks to provide business and other leadership lessons, and the outline of a framework that can be applied beyond the world of sports.

Shropshire says the ease of information has brought issues of equality and respect in sports to the public’s attention like never before.

“We probably wouldn’t have even known about the Dolphins incident had it not been for Twitter and text messaging,” he says.

Shropshire spoke with his contacts in the sports world for the book and says he was surprised that so many have not thought about diversity in terms other than numbers. He says diversity without inclusion is hollow; statistics alone are not enough.

“It’s not just diversity, it’s inclusion, it’s respect and equality,” he says. “That’s something I thought was certainly interesting. It wasn’t something that leadership in sports, or in other industries for that matter, fully focused on. The numbers yes, the inclusion no.”

Shropshire says he hopes the book has an impact in sports and beyond, and causes individuals to think more about diversity, inclusion, respect, and equality “across the board in whatever activities, whatever businesses they’re involved in.

“At a minimum, what we’re looking for is respect,” he says. “Not just to tolerate someone who’s different or believes differently, but really to respect them and provide the same opportunities for anybody, no matter who they are.”

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