

*Games, Sports and Cultures*. Noel Dyck, ed. Oxford: Berg, 2000. 246 pp.

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For a long time, sports and games passed beneath the attentions of ethnographers. Those anthropologists who were the first to take these topics seriously still express a certain pique (why does our hidebound profession keep ignoring sports research?) and defensiveness (this topic really is worth the discipline's attention!). But in its long history, anthropology has shown a constant capacity to enlarge itself, incorporating new perspectives, new regions, new topics, and self-critique. Surely sport is proving no exception, and these pioneer anthropologists need feel frustrated no longer. Certainly the substance of this volume's ten chapters amply demonstrates the richness of anthropology's recent opening toward sporting forms and formations.

Among critical sports studies in particular, the anthropological voice can have at least four distinct tonal qualities, each of which is heard in this volume. Most obvious is our commitment to close ethnographic understanding, which at once situates the sport topic in an immediate context and also establishes the basis for comparison. For example, Charles Springwood has an astute commentary on the loving but idiosyncratic re-creation of the Dyersville, Iowa, baseball "field of dreams" in a Japanese rice field, and the staging there of old-style baseball games as a processing of American nostalgia. Synthia Snyder muses about the conjoined liminalities of sport and celebrity through an interpretation of a popular tourist site in Chicago, the Michael Jordan monument.

Anthropologists are also crucial for sport studies when considering practices indigenous to the non-Western world within the same frameworks as those of "modern" Euroamerican sports (more typically the concern of other analysts). George Mentore considers a ritual archery competition among the Amazonian Waiwai to demonstrate that these public displays of individual skill have the collective power of enforcing the central legitimacy of Waiwai men as hunters. Joseph Alter presents a careful ethnographic and textual study of the Indian kabaddi, a vigorous team-tag game, which he positions between cricket and Indian wrestling, to analyze the simultaneous modernizing and indigenizing of kabaddi into a "national sport" of India.

Both of these chapters also exhibit a third anthropological perspective, which is to embed sports analysis within the social contexts of family, community, educational and economic institutions, and the state. Philip Moore, in his chapter, describes how and why the "world game" of soc-

cer has secured but an ethnic niche in the Australian sportscape. His explanation of the tensions and struggles within soccer combines both national policy shifts (state multiculturalism in the early 1970s) and the particular organizational culture of soccer in Western Australia.

Of particular interest in this volume are the three chapters that deal with youth athletes. Noel Dyck considers how Canadian children's sports participation constructs parent-child identities and explores the divergence of parental aspirations, official rationalizations, and the everyday sport experience of the children. Yngve Lithman presents a more abstract but complementary analysis of elite children's sports in Sweden, and Melford Weiss shows how strikingly different the adolescent experiences of female gymnasts in the United States are from their teenage cohorts. As Sharon Stephens and others have argued, anthropology has only recently turned an analytical eye to children, and sports studies offer a compelling venue for such a priority.

Finally, most of the chapters show that sports are as amenable to and as demanding of theoretical analysis as any other nexus of social activity. Of special value is the opening chapter by the editor, Dyck, and Susan Brownell's important contribution on "Why Should an Anthropologist Study Sports in China?" The provocative answer to her chapter's title is that it is only recently that anthropologists have finally embraced a set of theoretical concerns—from postcolonial studies, practice theory, feminism, body theory, and globalization and transnational studies—that both permit and require our focus on sport. She goes on to illustrate the usefulness of each of these perspectives for appreciating the trajectories of sports in China: how a discursive emphasis of face and national prestige rather than fair play emerged in China's assertive postcolonial nationalism, how the body culture of contemporary athletics reveal broader transformations of everyday life, and how the superior performances of female Chinese athletes have been rationalized by a highly gendered nationalist rhetoric.

In sum, the critical social science of sport is now a broad and vibrant field of inquiry, and increasingly anthropologists are bringing our disciplinary skills to bear on its core questions. This volume is a most useful sampler of these skills at work.