

## BOOK REVIEWS

Harris, H. A. *Sport in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972).

*Sport in Greece and Rome* is an excellent addition to the *Aspects of Greece and Rome* series produced by Thames and Hudson under the general editorship of H. H. Scullard. It is also a sequel to the author's *Greek Athletes and Athletics* (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1964).

Both books ought to be owned by everyone interested in sport as well as by all students in Classics. They are replete with factual information, anecdotes and interesting and provocative suggestions, all presented in such a lively and well-written style that the general public will find each of the two books fascinating reading.

The range of *Sport in Greece and Rome* is extensive. Its first chapter, *Greek Athletics* is a summary of the major points in *Greek Athletes and Athletics*. The second chapter deals with Greek athletics as entertainment for Roman audiences.

These two chapters are followed by a lively and informative section titled *Ball Games and Fringe Activities*. Its four chapters describe ball games, juggling, swimming and rowing, hoop-bowling and weight-lifting. In each case Mr. Harris compiles the evidence for the practice of the particular sport or activity by the Greeks and then portrays its vogue and practice in the Roman world.

In this section most of the conclusions or suggestions that Mr. Harris derives from the evidence seem valid, or at least, probable. However, one may query his conclusions about *Episkuros*, (pp. 86-87). When he states, in criticism of the theory that *Episkuros* was a team game like rugby football, that "Rugby football, like any other kind of football is based on kicking the football" he seems to have forgotten that in rugby football as played in North America today, kicking is only a part of a game in which a touchdown is the major score; although on page 104, he mentions "American football". Furthermore, the passage quoted in translation from Pollux does seem to indicate some sort of a team game, a possibility suggested by Mr. Harris in the note under Plate 46, but somewhat discounted in the text. The author, in fact, seems to favour both for *Episkuros* and *Harpastum* or *Phaininda* (pp. 87-89) a theory that a "middle player" tried to intercept a ball thrown past or over him between two lines of other players or, on occasion, by two other players. Since Mr. Harris describes a wide variety of ball games from simple throwing and catching to more complicated games, including one in which a stick or bat was used (p. 100) it would seem a possibility that the Greeks and Romans developed a number of team games (see the quotations in translation of p. 88 *re* *Phaininda* and on pp. 103-104 on a game played in Sparta). That a game with a ball and curved stick

somewhat similar to those used in today's field hockey existed is proved by Plate 47.

Plates 46 and 47 are both taken from photographs of a statue-base of the 6th century B. C., now in the National Museum, Athens. The original bas-reliefs are, therefore, excellent contemporary evidence for Greek games. When examined, both bas-reliefs seem to suggest team games. In the "facing-off" bas-relief, the extra figures on either side might possibly, because of space limitation, represent the other players on two opposing teams. If one studies the "team game" bas-relief, one might suggest a number of explanations for what the action means, including the possibility that the figures shown represent two teams, and that a forward pass is about to be thrown.

In a small detail, another reviewer (Barry Baldwin, University of Calgary in *Phoenix*, Vol. XXVII: 3, 1973, pp. 313-314) has already pointed out that, on page 92 "Martial's Laurus is a hopeless ball-player, not a 'real-tiger' as Harris hesitantly translates." One might add that, perhaps, the Latin phrase 'Epaphra pilicrepus non est', a wall-inscription from Pompeii, need not trouble Mr. Harris (p. 96) but may simply be the same sort of remark that one hears today such as "He's no hockey player".

The above somewhat minor suggestions do not detract in any way from the value of the great amount of information or from the careful and interesting assessment of that information in this section of Mr. Harris' book. The next eight chapters deal with horse-racing and chariot-racing. The Greek hippodromes and the Roman *Circus Maximus* with its accommodation for some 250,000 spectators are described. There are valid accounts of charioteers, such as Diocles, and of the perils and drama of the four-horse chariot race made familiar to us by Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur*. The statement about the stables that raced and the colors they used and of many other details will be of great value to those who have not studied Roman History. Among the many details the description of Kalpe (p. 158 and p. 181) as a horse-race in which the riders dismounted and ran the last lap clinging to their horses' bridles reminds one of the German foot-soldiers in Caesar's Gallic Wars (1.48) who charged into battle alongside their cavalry holding on to the horses' manes.

The *Appendix on Athletes and Their Dreams* is informative and entertaining. An important feature of the whole book is the author's ability to read Latin and Greek. It is even more important, perhaps, that Mr. Harris sees clearly that professionalism tends both to replace sport participated in by all by spectator-sport and to foster a "win at any price" attitude. To repeat, in information, in interest and in over all philosophy, *Sport in Greece and Rome* is a book which everyone can enjoy and which all interested in sport ought to own, read and consider.

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