

Spears, Betty and Swanson, Richard A. *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States*. Edited by Elaine T. Smith. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm C. Brown Company Publishers, 1978. Pp. xi, 402. Illustrations, index, notes, bibliography. \$11.95.

History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States by Betty Spears and Richard Swanson is an introductory textbook directed primarily toward courses concerned with both sport and physical education history. The authors are professional Physical Educators and Sport Historians, both are experienced coaches, teachers and administrators and both have contributed numerous articles and scholarly presentations on sport and physical education history. In addition, Spears has co-authored or contributed chapters to several pertinent books. Aside from history of physical education, their expertise concerns history of women's sports, religion and sport, and the Olympic Games. These are among the strongest areas in the book.

The writers know their intended audience well, and have provided a lively, contemporary text with over ninety photographs, many of them dynamic action shots of modern sports stars. Other attractive features include introducing the first intercollegiate contests through headlines, e.g.: "July 1, 1859. Amherst 73, Williams 32." (p.133). Sport stars of the "Golden Age" are presented in a "gum card" format wherein biography and photograph are set apart from the main text.

The book is described as a social history which emphasizes people rather than things, attempts to identify the sports and pastimes of the many diverse peoples which populate this country, and which relates developments in sport to the larger social issues of the times. In addition, the relationship between school sport and sport in society at large is stressed.

To accomplish these goals, the writers divide the history of sport and physical activity in America into six eras, each discussed in a single chapter. Each includes the relevant social issues; description and explanation of sport as pastime, entertainment and in education; dance of the times, summary and questions for study. Chapters begin with a time chart comparing the dates of significant events in history with those of significant events in sport.

The final chapter covers the Olympic Games from their genesis in Homeric Epic through Montreal in 1976. This chapter is a tightly written summary of a complex topic, enhanced by numerous charts and photographs. The continuity of narrative increases understanding of the relationship between the ancient and modern games and between the games and global events. Only in the effort to clarify the relationship between the athlete and the various governing bodies does the text become confusing.

Each of the chapters on American sport reads well and shows clearly the relationship between major changes in society (war, technological change, depression, civil rights) and in sports.

Baseball is used as the example for many developments in professional sport, and baseball heroes become the central figures in the discussions: Cartwright in the evolution from game to sport, Landis and the Commissioner System, Messersmith and the modern free agent. The organization and proliferation of the professional leagues is presented through easily understood charts.

Naming many sports stars of all periods certainly humanizes the text, but these well-intentioned efforts sometimes fail. A knowledgeable fan will surely question "Swinging" Sammy Sned, and football star "Don

Groza.” Efforts to give fair and equal treatment to all races and both sexes are also generally successful, but breakdowns do occur. It is difficult to imagine what might have been intended by such descriptions as, “Calm, steady, black Arthur Ashe. . .” (p.262). In this regard, it must also be noted that the writers have virtually ignored history in the Southwestern United States, and left the triumphs and frustrations of the Mexican-American and Hispanic athletes largely undocumented.

While these minor difficulties do not detract significantly from the overall integrity of each chapter, the original decision to divide the book into so many short time periods has created a larger problem which students have described as fragmentation, repetition, and discontinuity. Not only must each topic be discussed in five or six different chapters, no two chapters are arranged the same. Major topic headings vary from chapter to chapter, and even when headings are consistent, that to which they refer may change. Finally, the relationship between topic headings and the discussion which follows is not always clear. e.g. “Programs for Men” heads a discussion of NCAA football.

This inconsistency of chapter and topic arrangement, along with incomplete indexing and cross-referencing, creates problems for the student wishing to trace a particular topic through all time periods, or a teacher wishing to use the text in a course not designed to coincide with the specific time periods selected by the writers. For example, the complex relationships between physical education and athletics for men, physical education and athletics for women, and between men’s and women’s departments of physical education and/or athletics are all clearly described. However, they are scattered about the book in such a way that the total picture still fails to materialize. In addition, order of presentation within a chapter sometimes gives a false impression of chronology, as when sports in women’s colleges are discussed before those in men’s colleges, even though the latter were organized first.

Overall, *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States* is a well-written, very up-to-date book which is easily understood and enjoyed by students. It fills a great gap in the literature and brings much recent research in sport history out of the monographs and proceedings and into the hands of students and teachers.

Nonetheless, the particular success of the chapter on the Olympic Games suggests that Spears and Swanson might have produced an even more flexible and useful book had they discussed each of the various aspects of sport and physical activity over a longer time span rather than breaking them down into five or six repetitions to suit the short time periods.

The University of Texas at Austin

May Lou LeCompte