

Mangan, J. A. *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. xv, 345. Index, bibliography, notes, appendices, pictures, tables. \$49.50.

How does a reviewer describe a milestone book in his field? Simply put, J. A. Mangan's *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* is just such a work. Too many works have been described as notable contributions, when in fact they are simply ponderous rehashings of masses of old, easily-available information. Mangan has given us probably one of the most important and scholarly works yet produced to study an important factor in the development of modern sport, for the rise of athleticism was a seminal event in that development.

To realize the importance of Victorian public school sport, one needs only to look at its profound influence on Pierre de Coubertin, founding father and guiding light of the modern Olympic games, the goal of millions of the world's youths. The cult of athleticism which developed in the public (really "private") schools of England in the second half of the 19th century provided the seed for most of modern sport's customs, and perhaps all of its aberrations.

tions. To understand modern sport, we need to understand the 19th century public school athletics from which its ideals of competition and governance and its central theoretical foundations grew. Thus the importance of this major work of sport and educational historical scholarship.

J. A. Mangan is head of the Education Department at Jordanhill College of Education in Glasgow, Scotland. He has previously edited a text on socio-cultural perspectives of physical education and sport and has published papers in numerous historical and educational journals, with particular attention to the setting covered by this work. He is active in the new British Society of Sports History and is working on two other books, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, to appear in 1984, and *The Evolution of Sport in Africa*, co-edited with William Baker.

His basic task is illustrated by the book's subtitle, "The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology." The span of time is about three-quarters of a century, from about 1850 until the Great War. To give clarity to the magnitude of the task, Mangan cites no less than 48 schools, giving also a 1905 list of so-called "Great Public Schools" which included 35 names. To study in-depth almost a century of sporting and educational philosophy in half-a-hundred institutions is a vast undertaking, leading to either a life-time chore or the questionable practice of "skimming" the sources.

Mangan discusses his options, then opts to divide the schools into six categories: the Great Public Schools, the Denominational Schools, the Proprietary Schools, the Elevated Grammar Schools, the Woodward Schools, and the Private Venture Schools. From each of these groups he selected a single school, in each case one which played an important part in the tradition of athleticism, yet which also had extensive source materials surviving. This provided him with a six-school survey representative of the whole group. While it has its shortcomings (any choice of methods would, in a situation such as this), it seems logically an excellent choice from the perspective of evidence, as compared to the more common method of speculation.

As an indication of Mangan's thoroughness, while the book has 345 pages, the text comprises only 219 of them. To those are added 45 pages of appendices, including the texts of several documents he considers of historical significance. His notes on the text and sources cover 40 pages, followed by a 28-page bibliography. He has produced a notable work of scholarship, for as he notes in his prologue, rather than produce much grand theory from a paucity of data, as scholars do far too often, he set out to produce a small amount of fact and theory based upon a relative mass of material.

Mangan addresses critical questions, giving new, different, and well-documented answers. As an example, to the importance of the much-hallowed Thomas Arnold of Rugby as the founder and guiding light of athleticism in the public schools, comes the response, "Nonsense!" Thomas Arnold is to public school athleticism as Abner Doubleday is to American baseball: a popular myth. A search of Arnold's curricular changes in schools he headed, his sermons, his educational writings, and the activities and comments of his closest disciples shows absolutely no interest in games.

The space allowed is insufficient for a thorough review of the valuable contributions of this work. Its prohibitive price, understandable in the context of its rather specialized interest, will hamper interested readers. No department of sport studies or physical education should fail to have it in its library and in use. Indications are that there may be a Penguin edition of the text in the near future. If this is the case, it would be a must for the student or scholar interested in the origins of modern sport, as well as for the present or future sport historian as a model of research.

Mangan has done a superb job of putting the practices and theory into the context of the time, rather than simply judging it against a constantly-changing modern scene. He has done much to correct misconceptions about who really were the leaders and who were the followers in the growth of athleticism. Perhaps in the next century we will look back to the public schools' Age of Athleticism as some brightly-hued Golden Age, fit for slow-motion photography, heroic music, and soft tears for a past that never really existed except in our hearts. For today, Mangan has brought us as close as we have yet drawn to the reality behind the dream. It is an achievement worthy of our cheers, for it is a subject which affects us every day as we try to put sport into the perspective of the greater life, for in a very real way those boys on their playing fields of that by-gone era made sport what it is today. The better we understand them, the better we understand what we have today. I do not think I can overrate the value of Mangan's contribution to sport studies.

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