

Riess, Steven A., ed. *The American Sporting Experience: A Historical Anthology of Sport in America*. New York: Leisure Press, 1984. Pp. 400. Bibliography, notes. \$17.95 (paper).

Steven A. Riess correctly points out in his preface to *The American Sporting Experience* that the “scholarly study of sport history is still a relatively new field and there have been very few book-length monographs written” (p.6). Despite this fact an increasing number of teachers in various disciplines are offering college level courses in sport history. Although several solid textbooks have

appeared in recent years which cover the breadth of American sport history, many teachers would prefer to ground their courses on the solid foundations of primary documents and seminal articles in this relatively new discipline. Riess has attempted to meet this need and he has succeeded to a very large extent.

Riess's book is divided into five sections which cover the colonial era to the present. Each section contains at least one primary source document and several scholarly articles on some aspect of sport history in the period under discussion. Riess introduces each historical period with an informative essay in which he comments on the role of sport in that era and then places the selected articles within a historiographical context. At the conclusion of each section he includes a select bibliography which might be used by teachers or students for further reading.

The primary source materials are selected with care and in themselves give the reader a good understanding of how sport has developed in America over more than three hundred years. These readings include a selection from King James I, the "Book of Sport," a newspaper account of the Fashion v. Peytonia horse race of 1845, Walter Camp on sportsmanship, and the congressional testimony of Ike Williams on professional boxing. The scholarly articles emphasize new interpretations of how and why sport became prominent in America or revisions of traditional views about the relationship of sport and American life. Riess is successful to a great extent in interrelating the primary sources and the scholarly articles in each section.

Steven A. Riess has provided a welcome addition to the existing literature available to sport history teachers for classroom use. But as is the case with most anthologies, one might question the selection of articles and the overall coverage given to American sport. Clearly the best single section of the book covers the Progressive era and the 1920s which is Riess's period of expertise. This section includes eight outstanding selections including two by the author himself. The last section on contemporary sport, presumably 1945 to the present, is the least satisfying. Of the five articles in this chapter, two relate to boxing, two to intercollegiate athletics, and one to professional baseball through the eyes of Jackie Robinson. There is no mention of the fastest growing professional sports of this era which include football, basketball, and tennis and their interconnection with the television boom of the postwar years. Those instructors who emphasize the most recent period of American sport history will need to supplement Riess's volume with additional selections on post-1945 America. To be fair, however, one cannot expect to cover everything in a four hundred page book on American sport. What Riess has covered he has covered very well and he has provided a useful book for teachers and students of American sport history.