

RESPONSE TO DONALD KYLE AND MELVIN ADELMAN

When I set out to write a study of sports spectators from antiquity to the present, I realized that I was not qualified to accomplish the task as, ideally, it ought to be done. It is, therefore, no surprise that I am not the only person who wishes the book were better than it is. I am grateful for the opportunity briefly to respond to Kyle's and Adelman's criticisms.

No doubt I made too little use of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and of Xenophanes and Euripides, but I did attempt to use whatever Greek sources (in translation) that I was able to find. Although I surely should have done more to acknowledge century-to-century differences, I did not completely overlook the archeological evidence of changes from Homeric through classical to Hellenistic and Roman times (pp. 14-15). I hope it is not petulant to remark that Kyle's footnote about the materials added since my 1981 JSH article gives a false impression of the additional research done between 1980 and 1985. Readers afflicted with *deursche Akribie* can compare my two sets of notes. I must, however, admit that I was unaware of several of the titles Kyle mentions. *Mea culpa*.

Kyle's most important criticism, as I understand him, is his rebuke for my failure fully to accept the conclusions of Alan Cameron's *Circus Factions*. Since I am not foolish enough to challenge Cameron's authority, I do indeed accept his demolition of earlier notions that the Blues and Greens were well-defined religious and political groups, but it seems to me that Cameron, like other revisionists, sometimes pushes his argument beyond plausibility. One can, for instance, accept his proof that the Blues and the Greens were not political parties and still feel that their behavior had, at the very least, political implications. As for the question of class membership, my example from Bordeaux was merely that, an example. In fact, however, there seems to be a general tendency, throughout Western history, for the deprived rather than the privileged to commit sports-related violence. Unless I have badly misread Cameron, I do not believe he has any direct sociological evidence for his assertions about the class membership of the Blues and the Greens. Surely it is not impermissible for a nonspecialist to *ask* if Cameron might not have overstated his case on this point. Although my suggestions were based upon analogy, Cameron presumably shares my inquisitiveness about possible analogies between Byzantine and modern spectator violence because he refers in a note to Ian Taylor's research on contemporary British soccer hooliganism. Is it too picayune to point out that Cameron's term *jeunesse dorée* also sets up an implicit analogy between antiquity and modern times?

Adelman's criticisms are more numerous. Whether one considers the Princeton-Rutgers game of 1869 or the Harvard-McGill game of 1874 to be the first instance of American football depends on whether one considers soccer or rugby the direct ancestor of the American game. I opted for rugby (and should have been explicit about it). I did indicate (p, 69) that premodern estimates of

crowd size should be taken with a grain of salt, but this general disclaimer should have come in my introductory chapter and not *in medias res*.

But Adelman raises more important questions than these. I shall comment on three of them. Painful as it may be for academic lovers of the game to admit it, unusual as it is for a scholar as acute as Steven Riess to go wrong about it, baseball has been, since at least the 1850s more closely associated with the lower classes than with the middle or upper classes. My argument does not depend on the ethnicity of the fans (although I insist that that is a relevant factor) and I certainly did not mean to imply either that there was no middle-class interest in the game nor that the "ethnics" were at any time a majority of all the fans. Nonetheless, the evidence for the game's greater popularity among the lower classes, which I probably should have but did not array in *Sports Spectators*, is considerable. Nineteenth-century drawings and photographs show crowds dressed comparably, in my view, to the admittedly lower-class crowds at British soccer matches. Newspapers widely read by the lower classes covered baseball extensively while middle-class magazines like *Outing* had relatively few articles on the game. The upper-class publication, *The Book of Sport* (1901) featured chapters on golf, tennis, squash, hand-fives, coaching, yachting, steam yachting—but not a word on baseball. The constant claims of entrepreneurs like A. G. Spalding that baseball attracted the elite I take to be motivated by a self-interested desire to dispel the obvious associations of the game. These associations, the folklore of baseball, are overwhelmingly lower-class: beer, pretzels, hot dogs, shirtsleeves, loud cries of ungrammatical partisanship. I remember Comiskey Park in the 1930's as a very different place from Forest Hills. Even today, when it has become reckless to assume linear relationships between specific sports and social class, the A. C. Nielsen studies of television audiences, from 1964 to 1984, show that lower-class fans continue to be disproportionately attracted to baseball. I should add that my convictions about the class status of baseball were reinforced by conversations with Francis G. Couvares, whose book, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh* (1984), further corroborated my sense of who watched what. Rob Ruck's *Sandlot Days* (1987), on black sports in Pittsburgh, provides excellent evidence that baseball has had more appeal than other sports for the black underclass.

I can respond less truculently to Adelman's other criticisms. I regret any impression I might have given in my discussions of television that I thought the medium determined spectator behavior. Television is, of course, only one variable among many. Similarly, if I implied that "a single causal factor can provide a comprehensive account for the rise in soccer hooliganism," then I wrote carelessly, for I do realize that cheap transportation is only one factor in the equation. The "spiral of amplification" set in motion by the mass media and the sense of relative deprivation, also intensified by modern mass media, are among the other causes for the upturn in spectator hooliganism. Economic recession is doubtless a factor in Britain (but a less likely one in West Germany).

Adelman raises a fundamental question when he goes on to remark, "A more

satisfactory analysis [of soccer hooliganism] would emerge by relating this behavior to the broader changes within all facets of English and European societies over the last thirty years, and especially by examining how these forces affected youth and youth culture during these years.” Who can disagree? And for what analysis of sports does this criterion not apply? My comments on female spectators in medieval France, for instance (and this is only an example), would have been improved by relating *their* behavior to the broader changes within all facets of *their* societies, but all of us are limited in what we can accomplish. All of us, I assume, have been frustrated and depressed by our inability to follow the threads of history’s weave beyond the narrow patch on which we’ve worked. And all of us, unfortunately, need constant reminders of just how far short we fall of our own ideals. For such reminders from fellow scholars I am chagrined but grateful.

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