

Allison, Lincoln, ed. *The Politics of Sport*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1986. Pp. 264.

Wolfgang Hildenscheimer once wrote a story about a man whose mission in life was to hamper artistic creativity because there is already more art around than

anyone can appreciate. It was he, for instance, who persuaded Schubert to leave his symphony unfinished. I share the impulse of Hildesheimer's hero when I encounter yet another collection of papers given at a conference on sports studies. I recall a friendly physical educator who sweetened his invitation to participate with the remark that he planned to publish all the papers read whether they deserved it or not. We do not need this kind of encouragement. Allison himself seems to have some doubts. In his introductory essay, "Sport and Politics," he confesses, "that this is the kind of book of which I have often disapproved" (p. 24).

My dour thoughts should not be construed as a root-and-branch rejection of Allison's collection of conference papers, but *some* of the contributions seem to have been written by scholars whose commitment to sports studies began sometime after Allison's invitation to participate in the Political Studies Association's Annual Conference. Kate Brasher is a ranked tennis player and quite obviously an intelligent woman, but her essay on "Traditional versus Commercial Values in Sport" can hardly be considered scholarship. Trevor Taylor, on the other hand, is a specialist in international relations who has taken the trouble to familiarize himself with the field of sports studies and to think seriously about the topics he discusses. His essays on "Sport and International Relations" and "Politics and the Olympic Spirit" may not be definitive but they are at least informed and insightful. His terse comment on the International Olympic Committee's naive liberalism is almost epigrammatic: "A movement which tries to affect such a major aspect of State behaviour as the resort to force cannot easily be seen as apolitical" (p. 217).

The other eight essays range in value between the limits set by Brasher and Taylor. Ken Foster's brief "Sporting Autonomy and the Law" is a good reminder of the parallels between British and American sports-related law. Richard Thomas on the politics of hunting and John Hargreaves on the state and sport are summaries of their extended views in *The Politics of Hunting* (1983) and *Sport, Power and Culture* (1986). Most of James Riordan's "Elite Sport Policy in East and West" is an update of his magisterial book *Sport in Soviet Society* (1977). Riordan's essay bears the signs of haste and will be a real disappointment to anyone familiar with his previous work. One does learn a good deal about the structure of sport in the Soviet Union, but one also comes upon some jarring obiter dicta. He asserts, for instance, "The extraordinary attempts by the US administration to keep most Communist nations out of Los Angeles, and the imposing upon them of the US client-state of South Korea as host nation for the 1986 [sic] summer Olympics are just two examples of the new concerted Western policy" (p. 87). No evidence is offered for this remarkable opinion. Where Riordan got the notion that Austria won thirty-five medals at the 1956 Olympics (p. 67) I leave to speculation.

*The Politics of Sport* includes brief but informative essays on the political dimensions of sport in Northern Ireland, South Africa, and anglophone black Africa. Had the book been conceived as a study of politics and sport in the British Commonwealth, the prospective reader would have had a better idea of

what to expect. And those who wanted to learn about Soviet sport would have been forced to pay attention to Riordan's more serious work.

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