

Carruth, Gorton, and Ehrlich, Eugene. *Facts and Dates of American Sports From Colonial Days to the Present*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. Pp. ix, 373. Index, no notes, \$27.00.

The title sounds like a sport historian's dream come true, something to keep close by for ready reference. Unfortunately, the book promises much more than it delivers. As proclaimed on the cover, the book does contain "thousands of information-packed entries," and "accounts of memorable sports events." However, dust jacket notwithstanding, it really does not ". . . put sports great and events into perspective . . .," and it would be a very poor source for learning how football evolved ". . . from a sport prohibited at Yale to a multi-billion-dollar industry." While *Facts and Dates* may be "The perfect source for settling sports arguments," information can be difficult to locate. For example, one of the questions on the back cover asks: "What is the only U.S. sport recognized by a Congressional Charter of Federal Incorporation?" The answer "Little League Baseball, chartered on July 16, 1964." Unfortunately, in order to find that fact, it is necessary to know the answer! There is no reference in the Index to Congressional Charter of Federal Incorporation or any similar phrase.

The authors never explain the intended use, but research was probably not their aim, since the book is dedicated to ". . . millions of loyal American fans . . ." Also, neither author is a sport historian. Carruth, author of *The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates*, is a reference book editor, while Ehrlich a "die hard sports fan" recently produced *The Harper Dictionary of Foreign Terms*. Their lack of expertise in sport history is probably responsible for some of the puzzling statements such as the following regarding the Round Hill

School: “. . . the term *gymnasium* was applied to the program of exercise, not a building, since the activities were conducted outdoors.” (p. 6) Also, on page eight they note that “Rounders bore little resemblance to American Baseball.” The brief mention of the Interim Games of 1906 includes no explanation of their relationship to the Olympic movement (p. 74), and no relationship is shown between important revisions in intercollegiate football rules which took place in 1906 the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association that same year. (pp. 72 and 74 respectively).

The main body of the book is the chronological listings which begins with the 1540 introduction of horses, and ends with the 1988 Super Bowl. There are also “Tables of Records and Statistics,” “Ten Memorable Sports Events,” and “Biographies of Sports Greats.” Segments of these three features are scattered throughout the book in no discernible order. This arrangement is most confusing. It would have been much more useful to have a section of the book for each feature.

Actual annual lists of events do not begin until 1870. Other information is arranged into periods, with the years 1500-1699 being the first and including twenty facts, followed by 1700 through 1749 with thirteen entries. There are several periods of twenty to twenty-five years, ten years and finally five years. Each contains an average of seventeen facts. The annual entries for the 1860s average six items apiece, while by the 1970s, there are as many as fifty entries per year.

Although over sixty sports are mentioned, only thirteen are presented on a consistent basis, and these include the very same sports featured in the “Tables of Records and Statistics.” Other sports are covered so sporadically that no real sense of their development or importance can be gleaned. It is uncertain how the authors selected their material, but they made some unusual choices. For example, they describe the formation of the Professional Golf Association, but not the Ladies Professional Golf Association. Also noted are the origins of the National Association of Angling and Casting Clubs, and the American Trapshooting Association. Despite numerous entries on wrestling “when it was a legitimate sport” and several on rodeo, no mention was ever made of the organizations which govern either. *Facts and Dates* also lists the results of every Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show since 1875, but mentions no equestrian contests or horse shows. There are numerous entries on horse shoe pitching, hurling, and ice fishing, but none on table tennis, body building or water polo. There is one entry on weight lifting, and three on the Martial Arts.

One hundred seventy individuals, including thirty-seven women, are subjects of biographical sketches of 150 to 400 words. They represent twenty-six sports, although over half are involved with football, baseball and basketball. To their credit, the authors did select athletes from many different eras, including the present. They are also to be commended for including practitioners of sports like surfing, figure skating, and field hockey. But even within the context and limitations of this book, there seem to be more notable omissions, such as Alexander Cartwright, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Elizabeth Robinson, and

Albert G. Spalding. Moreover, the biographies do little more than list places and dates of birth and death, and most notable achievements. *The Biographical Dictionary of American Sport* (BDAS) is a much more thorough and reliable source for such information.

While the biographical sketches are placed somewhere near the year in which the subjects were born, most of the "Ten Memorable Sporting Events" are described in detail close to the year in which they occurred. No explanation is given of how the events were selected, and none of the ten involves female athletes. No discernible pattern could be found for the placement of the "Tables of Records and Statistics," which list the annual winners of twenty-seven sporting events from tennis to figure skating. Lists of various baseball champions and winners of awards like the Heisman Trophy are also included. This same information can easily be found, often in greater detail, in one or several of the popular almanacs such as *Information Please* and *World Almanac*, which are of course updated annually.

Mercifully, the Index is at the end of the book. However, some of the entries are listed by page number, others by the date or dates on which they occurred. Individuals are listed by last name only, despite the fact that certain last names, such as Howe, have been shared by several athletes. The Index is also somewhat inaccurate, lacking in essential terms, and decidedly difficult to use.

Facts and Dates of American Sports From Colonial Days to the Present, is a most ambitious but seriously flawed work. It will probably be most popular among trivia buffs and armchair quarterbacks. As Red Barber said in his glowing introduction (p. ix): ". . . it is an 'amazing' book."

The University of Texas at Austin

Mary Lou LeCompte