

Hoose, Phillip M. *Necessities: Racial Barriers in American Sports*. New York: Random House, 1989. Pp. xv, 161. Photographs, \$15.95.

In 1967 black activists shocked the American sports world when they urged a boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games. The leaders of the boycott urged black athletes to recognize that their talents could be used as a form of political power to publicize and correct the widespread exploitation of black athletes. The proposed boycott puzzled and outraged many Americans who believed that competitive athletics had transcended American racism. They believed this because black athletes starred in America's revenue generating sports. This black presence suggested that sport rewarded ability, nothing more and nothing less.

Two decades later, in 1987, another benchmark in the history of sport and racism occurred when Al Campanis, the Vice-President of player personnel for the Los Angeles Dodgers, declared, before a national audience, that blacks "may not have some of the necessities to be . . . a field manager or perhaps a general manager." The forum for these remarks was Ted Koppel's late night news program, *Nightline*, and the occasion, paradoxically, the fortieth anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Mr. Campanis's remarks provided the title, and perhaps the inspiration, for Phillip M. Hoose's exploration of racism in American sports.

Mr. Hoose is a professional writer who has written *Hoosiers: The Fabulous Basketball Life of Indiana* and *Building An Ark*, a study of environmental issues. The author's purpose was not to write a history of racism in sport, but to provide "a guide to the racial biases and racially influenced practices operating in American sport today" (p. xxv). His conclusion is that "racial prejudice remains as deeply rooted in American sports as it is in American society in general" (p. xviii).

Although *Necessities* provides neither footnotes nor bibliography, the text indicates that Mr. Hoose is familiar with the recent literature on sport and racism. Much of what he writes will be familiar to those who have read this literature. For example he discusses the slotting of black athletes into positions that require speed rather than judgement in football and baseball. He describes the high risks involved when a young person forsakes an education for a career in professional sports. He emphasizes that the visibility of black athletes is not matched by a black presence in management, ownership, or the ancillary positions of athletic enterprises. Finally, he stresses that the media diminishes black accomplishment when it describes blacks as great athletes or naturals and white athletes as heady or disciplined.

As far as scholarship is concerned, this book breaks no new ground. *Necessities*, however, does tell some good stories. Mr. Hoose, relying heavily on interviews, describes Tom and Tracy Lewis' two-year operation of the Savannah Cardinals. He describes Clarence "Moby" McLeod's heroic efforts to provide a swimming program for Cleveland's blacks. Finally, he provides an interesting account of baseball's effort to develop talent in the Dominican Republic.

The argument that racism persisted in American sports after its integration and that it continues to infect the American sports world is beyond debate. Mr. Hoose's thesis that the nature of racism in American sport, after twenty years, remains unchanged is less convincing. For example, he writes that unlike its treatment of white athletes, the media leaves black athletes "without context, without family history, and without dimension" (p. 8). In the last twenty years, however, the lives of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jackie Robinson, Isiah Thomas, Jesse Owens, and Joe Louis have been explored by the various forms of the media, and they do not exhaust the list. The author also diminishes black successes or dismisses them as tokenism. In writing about the media, Hoose observes that blacks do not have the top jobs, or "like NBC's (*sic*) Irv Cross, play third fiddle on the halftime show" (p. 22). The author is ambivalent about Bill White's appointment to serve as the National League's president. On the one hand, it is a "strong statement and a positive beginning." On the other hand, White's job is largely that of disciplinarian, ruling on fines and suspensions of players, settling disputes between managers and umpires" (p. xxii). Real power, he argues, rests with baseball owners and their subordinates.

The focal point for the racism in sport argument today is in the area of ownership and management. Hoose contends that with the exception of the players, "virtually everyone who makes serious money" in sport is white (pp. xxiii-xxiv). The author attributes the absence of black ownership in sports to racism because "The seventies and eighties have spawned hundreds of black millionaires" (p. 31). This statistic, in and of itself, is some evidence of change in American race relations. Hoose also points out that "Black sports entrepreneurs have achieved real, enduring economic clout . . . in boxing" (p. 30). Finally, Hoose reports that in 1987 professional baseball hired 180 new minority employees. The author completed his manuscript before the 1989 selection of Cito Gaston to manage the Toronto Blue Jays and the elevation of Art Shell to the head coaching position of the NFL's Los Angeles Raiders.

Mr. Hoose claims that since Jackie Robinson took the playing field in 1947, sports have not brought Americans "appreciably closer" (p. xxvi). The author provides no evidence for this assertion. Moreover, he offers no method of analyzing how we could measure progress toward this goal. Perhaps one of the problems with the contemporary debate over race and sport is that it has revolved too frequently around claims and counter-claims about the contribution of sports to racial harmony in the United States. Mr. Hoose, in the beginning of his book, makes it clear that his intention was not to write a careful

history of race and sport in the United States over the past two decades. His historical judgements suggest the necessity for such studies.

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