

Littlewood, Thomas B. *Arch: A Promoter, Not a Poet: The Story of Arch Ward*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1990. No notes, photographs. \$24.95.

Thomas Littlewood spent twenty-five years as a newspaperman, including a stint as a sports editor. He currently serves as a professor of journalism at the University of Illinois. *Arch* is his fourth book, and his second biography, but presents his initial venture into sport history.

Littlewood admits that as a young sports reporter covering football games at Notre Dame, he held Arch Ward, the portly, balding, powerful sports editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, in awe. Given such a confession and some parallels in

their careers, one might expect a biased glorification in this the first biography of Arch Ward. The author portrays his subject as the “most spectacular of newspaper sports promoters . . . who altered the history of spectator sports in the United States . . . a pivotal figure between the Golden Twenties and the Age of Television.” (Intro.) Despite such lavish praise, the author demonstrates a more balanced approach throughout the remainder of the work.

One must acknowledge Arch Ward’s many achievements. Starting as Knute Rockne’s first press agent in 1919, Ward learned to “think big.” As sports editor for the *Chicago Tribune* from 1930-55, he enjoyed the power, influence, and resources that enabled him to bring his dreams to fruition. Ward organized the first All-Star baseball game, the College All-Star football game, the Golden Gloves boxing tournaments, and the professional All-American Football Conference as a rival to the NFL. Ward’s influence extended to the making and breaking of football coaches, particularly at Notre Dame. He declined the role of NFL commissioner, but assured the position for a friend, Elmer Layden. He even tried, unsuccessfully, to influence a papal election.

Despite such accolades, Littlewood is tentative in his conclusions. He acknowledges that the *Tribune* and many other newspapers conducted sports promotion to attract readers long before Ward assumed the reins of leadership, though none conducted such events with the same panache. Although Ward is credited as being the creator of the all-star spectacles, the author is careful to admit that the idea for such a game was first proposed in 1915. Littlewood grants George Halas a claim to the All-Star football game, and states that both contests were initiated by Mayor Ed Kelly’s requests for sports events that might augment the 1933 World’s Fair.

It is in the process of describing Ward’s public life that the author provides important clues to enhance our understanding of sport and the relationships that are engendered by its many facets. Ward’s contacts covered the political spectrum, from Senator Joe McCarthy to the Kennedy clan. Through Ward’s sporting ventures the liberal Catholic Cardinal George Mundelein, a staunch supporter of Franklin Roosevelt, found some accommodation with the arch-conservative owner of the unabashedly Republican *Tribune*, Colonel Robert R. McCormick.

McCormick, and his lieutenant, Arch Ward, delighted in challenging the hegemony of the Eastern press. Lacking literary style and polish (a promoter, not a poet,) Ward often thought out loud in his newspaper column, excoriating losers, dispensing advice, and airing dirty laundry to a national audience. He ran *Tribune* promotions as his personal domains, careless of the conflict between his roles as reporter and sponsor. In the case of the All-Star football game, Ward advertised the collegians as the people’s team but stored the people’s unopened ballots in sacks as he handpicked players and dictated coaches to gain a measure of success. Such manipulation extended to personal contacts, inviting controversy and enmity.

It is this personal side of Arch Ward that proves more difficult to capture. Provided with little or limited access to family members and the *Tribune*

archives, the author is relegated to much speculation about the private man. Second hand accounts and vignettes provide insight, but lack intimacy with the subject, and fail to fully explain the paradox between Ward's public and private lives. For example, on the same page (112) the reader is treated to the apparent contradiction of a devoted husband and family man who kept a mistress and traveled with female companions.

Although well-documented by primary sources, the work may have benefited by greater familiarity with secondary materials offering analysis by sport historians. Only two works of recent vintage are cited. Errors, such as listing the 1933 East-West all-star game of the Negro League as being played a year earlier (p. 68); and the contention that Ward's All-American Conference made a coast-to-coast football league a reality, despite the acknowledgement that the NFL Rams preceded the ACC on the West Coast (p. 175), might have been avoided. Despite such lapses Littlewood has presented the only biography of this important sports figure in the transitional period "from Rickard to Roone Arledge," and proved, once again, that sport, politics, and religion make for strange, if regular, bedfellows.

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