

Book Reviews

Knuttggen, Howard G., Ma, Qiwei, and Wu, Zhonguan, eds. *Sport in China*. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1990. Pp. 222. Photographs, index. \$28.00.

In the front of this book is a map of China which gives the reader a revealing preview of what to expect. It labels Taiwan as a province of the People's Republic of China. The content therefore is the official government description of China sport and presents an uncritical account for the most part. The contributing authors are mostly associated with the governmental bureaucracy, and all are located in the capital city of Beijing. There is thus little input from non-governmental authorities or from specialists in other areas of this vast country which would help to make the text more credible.

This publication reminds one very strongly of the kind of information that came out of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic prior to the tearing down of the Berlin wall. It must be read with caution. Governmental publications like to provide statistical data as unquestioned evidence of the true situation. For example, at a sports medicine meeting in 1985 one is informed that "188 Chinese scholars and 74 foreign participants" presented 262 papers (p. 56). Does this imply that the "foreign participants" were not scholars? Or, a study of children produced "4,410,936 items of data" (p. 55). Another study sought to develop criteria for selecting athletes. It was based on 748,000 original data taken from 102 test items obtained from 14,871 athletes in five sports (p. 154). But nothing is said about what criteria were formulated.

Other statements must be viewed with considerable skepticism. On p. 74 it states that "every child is provided with a program in which central planning and administration assures content and quality." Another statement on p. 68 says that "State Physical Training Standards have been implemented in *all* schools" (italics are ours). These are the dreams of every bureaucrat!

The serious student of history will be disappointed. There are no footnotes and no bibliography. Historical information is limited to the first 24 pages and a few scattered pages thereafter. This is not a criticism but simply a statement of fact for prospective readers. The historical account omits the fascinating "friendship first, competition second" era, and there is no mention of the dispute with the International Olympic Committee over Taiwan's participation in the Olympic Games. Two charts are included: "Periods and Important Events in China's History" and "Important Events in the Modern History of Chinese Physical Culture."

Almost one-third of the book deals with sports science, which in Chinese terminology includes sports medicine. This emphasis on sport science is a

natural reflection of Dr. Knuttgen's professional work at Boston University and presently at Pennsylvania State University and the primary reason for his seven trips to China since 1980. The editors have done a fine job of putting the text into readable and proper English. Working from Chinese to English is not an easy task. In one minor slip (p. 127) the top international trophy for badminton comes out as the "Yeub Cub" rather than the Uber Cup, but there are very few errors of this kind.

A few other deficiencies should be pointed out. Almost all of the chapter on the preparation of physical education teachers centers on the fourteen institutes of physical education. One sentence mentions that there are also 116 physical education departments in the colleges and universities. These institutions, as well as the numerous teachers' colleges, deserve much more space and credit for their significant role in teacher preparation. The traditional sport of *qigong* has become far more popular than the authors describe. It is sometimes referred to as the "new religion in China" and has spread to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. It is an important, distinctly Chinese, contribution to the world of sport along with *wushu* and *taijiquan*. No reference is made to the Children's Palaces which provide after-school activities for youngsters with a professional staff in charge. Shanghai and Guangzhou alone have 13 of them in each city. The program and influence of the Young Communist League are omitted.

The officials of the national government of any country are loathe to expose their problems, and China has many that place formidable obstacles to the development of physical education and sport. One is a severe shortage of indoor facilities although great progress has been made. But it is a fact that most games of basketball, volleyball, table tennis, and badminton are played outdoors and often on dirt or concrete surfaces. Large classes of 60 or more students are more the rule than the exception. Equipment for a good program is in short supply in many areas of the country. Thus many common activities, requiring little or no equipment or apparatus, are relay races, tug-of-war, tumbling, calisthenics, marching, and *wushu*.

In this book the overall physical culture in China needs to be put into more of an educational, social, political, and cultural context. Some of these factors are briefly pointed out here and there in the text, but they deserve more emphasis and detail. A number of questions arise. What was the effect of the Cultural Revolution on both national and international sport? What was the specific impact on the long war with the Japanese? How has the geographical diversity of China affected sport? Is physical culture today still affected by the doctrines of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, which promoted the quiet, intellectual life over the physical? There is much to study and learn from this intriguing country—a country where a class of college students could not believe that their female instructor from the United States had never carried water in a bucket from a well to her household.

To conclude, those individuals looking for the official, governmental view of sport and physical education in China will find this book acceptable. The more inquisitive scholar will have to look elsewhere for the complete unbiased story.

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