

## Museums

MUSÉE NATIONAL DU SPORT, Stade du Parc des Princes, 24 rue du Commandant Guilbaud, 75016 Paris, France. Telephone: 40459912 or for reservations 40459920. Open 09hr30 to 12hr30 and 14hr00 to 17hr00. Admission 20FF with reductions for scholars and associations. Nearest Metro station: Porte de Saint-Cloud. Nearest bus stop: Porte d'Auteuil.

The area around the southern part of the Bois de Boulogne in western central Paris is given over to sporting and cultural activities. Going from north to south there is the Longchamp racecourse, Roland-Garros Stadium, and the Parc des Princes.

Longchamp is the administrative headquarters of the French Racing Federation and also has as its major event of the season the running of the 'Prix de Arc de Triomphe.' There is a small racing museum/gallery in the main grandstand which opens at the whim of the ancient curator.

The French Tennis Federation is based at the Roland-Garros Stadium with their major tennis tournament of the year being one of the four 'grand-slam' titles. Again, a small museum exists; however, there is little of note in it. Of much more interest are the tennis sculptures dotted—seemingly at random—all around the complex.

The Parc du Princes Stadium has been virtually rebuilt in the past decade, especially since the decision to make it the major outdoor venue for association football and rugby union in Paris. The last stage of this redevelopment saw a section of the voids of the Western Stand allocated for a new 'Museum of Sport.' With the Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports providing the finances and the Direction des Sports bringing representatives of sporting bodies together there was agreement to create a sports museum. It was decided to give the whole of the voids area on the fourth level and half of the third over to displays and a small cinema theater with the rest of the third level being for administration and research. Other large parts of the stand are secure storage areas which are dry and in which the humidity levels are constantly monitored. When the curator and his staff have time, and documents have been classified, a library section will be created. At the moment, in storage are records of an untold number of sporting organizations.

The Museum opened in February 1988 with all of the fourth level being given over to a permanent exhibition concerning French sport. Much use has been made of photographic material, with the extensive wall space being used to the full. A lot of thought has gone in to making an initial impact with what is on show. This leads to more closer inspections resulting in a wealth of information being given on each subject.

The specialist sports seem to be on the Olympics, boxing, cycling, and—for use of a better word—pedestrianism. A concentration on the period 1920–40 was noted with a splendid innovation being the use of laminated

photocopies of the front pages of the sporting newspapers displayed for reading in the format of large flags.

There was little in the way of ceramics but much in metal such as cups, medals, trophies, and Olympic-style torches. Some artistic engravings by a former rugby international formed part of a backdrop on the area allocated to the sport. Tennis was very noticeable, with Suzanne Lenglen and the Four Musketeers dominating their section.

The small cinema was showing a seemingly endless run of black-and-white films on French sporting successes between the two wars. The popularity of these was most noticeable by the attendance.

On the third level, each exhibition runs for about three months. On my visit (September 1995) the show was a quite splendid display on French sport during the Nazi occupation, 1940–44. Little did I realize that sport in the country was only interrupted during the winter season of 1944–45! The French seem to have the knack of being able to explain so much through their illustrations, and this museum is no exception to the rule.

At the entrance is a small counter with a glass top which shows the few items for sale. I purchased a copy of their just-released first video production which uses film from the archives. It is titled “Pierre de Coubertin, vivant.”

The four hours spent in the ‘Musée’ was, quite frankly, not long enough. However, it was only after departure that so much came back into the mind in the way of unanswered questions and a feeling that a quick return would be necessary.

Association of Sports Historians

Chris Harte

The exhibit “Baseball Enlists.” National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, 25 Main Street, P.O. Box 590, Cooperstown, New York 13326-0590 (May 29, 1995–December 31, 1996). Telephone (general information): 607-547-7200; telephone (research department): 607-547-6331. The exhibition curator is Ted Spencer.

On January 14, 1942, Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis approached President Franklin Roosevelt and asked, “What do you want [baseball] to do?” The horror and shock of Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into the maelstrom of World War II. In what has come to be known as the “Green Light” letter, F.D.R. encouraged Landis to sustain baseball, for the game was “thoroughly worthwhile.” Very quickly, baseball launched a forceful campaign to garner support from all sectors of the community for the war effort. Organized baseball raised vast amounts of money for the war effort led by the likes of Connie Mack and Babe Ruth. Military personnel

were admitted to games free of charge. As is noted in the exhibition: "Patriotism joined the roster. Baseball had enlisted."

It is not without significance that a picture of Bob Feller being sworn into the military dominated the cover page of the exhibition flyer. He, as with many other players, provides that fascinating cultural link with the past, the present, and the future. It is as if baseball generates magical connections that energize the game even in the troubled times of the 1995 season. Feller enlisted in the Navy two days after Pearl Harbor. He was the best pitcher in the majors. During his war years, he could have been a baseball-playing soldier; he did not. During 1942, he served on the USS *Alabama* as it survived boat attacks on the Perilous convoy route (the Murmansk run) to the Soviet Union. As a result of his war service, he may have missed out on as many as 100 wins. In an *Associated Press* interview, he commented, "I don't regret at all that I missed almost four years. The heroes are buried in Europe, buried in the Pacific. We were the fortunate ones to return from World War II."

"Baseball Enlists" uses a rich variety of artifacts, photographs, video (a seven-part series) and text, and builds the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of World War II around a series of cleverly constructed themes: "Baseball Enlists," "War Dominates Baseball," "On the Home Front," "Uncle Sam's Teams," "Baseball in Backpacks," "The War Casualties," and "The Door Inches Open."

The exhibition highlights lesser known aspects of wartime baseball. There is a detailed discussion of the All-American Girls Baseball League and an examination of the likes of Satchel Paige and Cool Papa Bell, wooing record crowds, in the Negro League. During the war, understandably, the armed services built their best teams by recruiting and trading for professional players. Gene Tunney, remembered more for his epic boxing battles with Jack Dempsey, coached a Norfolk Naval Training Station team to a 92-win and 8-loss record. There was the Armed Forces Radio Service which broadcast games to 166 centers around the world. And, of course, there were the casualties of war. Harry O'Neil of the A's and Elmer Gedeon of the Senators were killed, as were more than 40 minor league players.

"Baseball Enlists" is a wonderful paean to baseball. Happily, it addresses the relationships of sport, society, and wartime. Joe DiMaggio joined the Army, Ted Williams flew planes for the Marines, and Yogi Bera, Duke Snider and Jackie Robinson also saw military duty. Nevertheless, while these stars are given stellar treatment in Cooperstown, the down-to-earth dynamics of the game are scrutinized. For each woman who brought a can of kitchen fat to a stadium, admission was reduced a quarter. The fat was desperately needed in the manufacture of munitions. During the war, black servicemen fought for their country and died. An integrated battlefield (although not, it should be stressed, integrated military baseball teams within the United States) arguably moved America towards integrated baseball. In the year that the war ended (1945) the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey,

signed Jackie Robinson to a minor league contract.

In the fall 1994 issue of the *Journal of Sport History*, E. John B. Allen voiced his distaste for “Halls of Fame” and said with great truth, that many such centers place nostalgia and inductions before “historical accuracy.” “Baseball Enlists” situates a trip down memory lane (the wartime photographs, mementos, equipment, scorecards) into a serious context and sustained analysis on the place of the national pastime half a century ago.

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