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BALE, JOHN AND JOE SANG. *Kenyan Running*. London, England: Frank Cass & Co., 1996. Pp. x, 209. Figures, tables, acknowledgements, preface, maps, notes, references, bibliography, index. \$35.00.

My initial interest in this book was from a coaching perspective, looking for physiology of training specifics to explain the great speed with which the Kenyans race. I have been fascinated through the years with the evolution of performance

in track and field distance races, as well as cross-country. I have been personally influenced by many of the recognized great distance coaches of modern times, such as Percy Cerutti, Arthur Lydiard, Franz Stampfl, Mihaly Eglöe, and Bill Bowerman, to name a few, as well as countless ideas and theories gathered from great distance runners throughout the world.

This study of the evolution of distance running led to an interest in the training techniques of the Kenyans. Just as the studies done on athletes breaking the four-minute mile for the first time concluded that performance was based upon one singular physiological advantage, current explanations of the superiority of Kenyan distance runners tend to look for simple factors in a highly complex formula. Lifestyle, attitude, diet, physiology, and training methods are being studied. This book helped me to understand again the importance of the holistic approach to coaching. Performance is not based upon a specific workout, technique, anatomy, or physiology, but is a complex accumulation from a wealth of experiences drawn from our culture, society, history, and geography.

The historical review of early semblances of track and field describes the evolution of the activities into modern track and field. The authors trace the colonial influences of British imperialism, the modernization of sport, and the mobility and exploitation of athletes in the globalization of sport. The financial reward and status attained and attributed to the great distance runners in Kenya pull individuals away from their culture and way of life and into the intense competitive training received by promising runners. Training begins early and becomes an encompassing lifestyle. Distance runners in the United States tend to look for “the workout” or “the system” as the secret to great performances. The secret is not in a workout, but in complex influences throughout life that contribute to the motivation, physical development, commitment, and discipline to reach the world-class performances of the Kenyans.

Although the book is not about training technique, it is a history of the factors that set the stage for outstanding performance in Kenya. The development of the material to illuminate this process is a real credit to the authors. I would strongly recommend this book to students of sport as a great insight into one country’s rise to the top in a sport. It provides a good illustration of one country’s dominance in a sport and the process by which its athletes are drawn into a “global system of sport.”

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