

---

WIGGINS, DAVID K. *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White World*. Sports and Entertainment Series. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997. Pp. 302. Notes, illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. \$45 cb, \$19.95 pb.

David K. Wiggins has contributed a great deal to the field of sport history. This work, with the exception of the final chapter on Edwin Bancroft Henderson, is a collection of previously published essays on African American participation in sport. One statement captures the context of the entire book, as documented by Wiggins. Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder told a local television interviewer in Washington "that blacks were better athletes than whites because they were bred to be that way since the days of slavery, and that if more blacks became coaches there's not going to be anything left for the white people (p. 194).

This hypocritical statement by Snyder raises many questions that *Glory Bound* seeks to answer by being divided into three parts. Part one is appropriately labeled "From Plantation to Playing Field" and discusses the development of slave children with play and self-esteem. One interesting theme in this chapter is the cooperation and team orientation in the black community. This has seemingly changed over time with individualism becoming more prominent among African Americans who are chasing the upward mobility paradigm. Further inquiry should analyze how African Americans survived and transcended the plantation by not only playing sports, but having spiritual faith and conviction. These conclusions could probably be applied to contemporary life for blacks.

Chapter two is "cutting edge" in that we learn about a black athlete who does not participate in football or basketball. Issac Murphy is considered the best jockey of the late nineteenth century according to Wiggins, and his research supports such a contention (44 percent winning percentage). Before falling victim to the pressures of his lifestyle, Murphy was well aware that all eyes were on him and that the world was watching. Wiggins articulates, "his ethics were stellar in his prime and Murphy knew a black man was the number one suspect in any unprincipled dealing. It would be foolish, therefore, to try anything the least bit suspicious" (p. 24).

Chapter three is a great follow up to Murphy and his plight. Peter Jackson, a heavyweight boxer, might have been as famous as Jack Johnson if he had been given the chance. This Australian native was avoided like the plague while white fighters claimed he was inferior. Jackson was also thought to be a “natural” athlete rather than a hard worker. There seems to be a great link (exclusion and barriers) between Joe Gilliam (quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers) and Jackson. Both were in the right place at the wrong time.

Part two is titled “Civil Rights and the Quest for Equality” and is lengthy. Through this collection, we see the emphasis of Wiggins as a scholar. It begins with the 1936 Olympics and Jesse Owens, and then moves to Wendell Smith and the importance of black newspapers fighting for integration in baseball. Following these two chapters is the discussion of the revolt of the black athlete at the Olympics and on predominately white university campuses. Part two ends with an excellent analysis of Muhammad Ali and the meaning of his stand.

Part three moves us towards an analysis of sport in modern society. “Race Relations and the Ideology of Sport” has three great essays. The first issue is similar to the sexually transmitted disease herpes—it will not go away. The historical debate over black athletes and their achievements is still a battle between social scientists and exercise physiologists. I would agree with Wiggins’ perspective, which argues that the environment is a greater factor than evolution, but I still see a lack of social and political analysis and how the mass media contributes to racist beliefs about black people performing in general. Harry Edwards, Laurel Davis, and Patrick Miller have come the closest in their essays on this subject. We must keep in mind, as I mentioned earlier, that Snyder’s remarks are hypocritical. Why did he say that blacks are bred for the physical and then follow up this same remark with the notion that whites want to keep their jobs without competition? How much does social propaganda and the power structure play in the stagnant beliefs that African Americans are “natural” athletes? These questions are where we, as academicians, need more analysis, not strength in muscle fibers, legs, and tendons. As scholars Drew Hyland, a sport philosopher, and Dee Edington, a physiologist, have pointed out, “it’s a dangerous argument.”

The next essay in part three has broader implications than just black athletes. It’s a dilemma that every person out of the mainstream faces—living in two worlds. From an African American perspective, this chapter makes it clear that the book very well could have been titled “Glory Bound: Black People in a White World.” Specifically, white athletes are not asked to be role models and to appease political agendas.

Last but not least, the book ends with an original essay on the life of Edwin Bancroft Henderson and his numerous publications on black athletes. Wiggins has concluded the book in fine fashion, and I recommend this chapter on race and sport for all scholars and especially black intellectuals striving to become the next Edwin B. Henderson or Harry Edwards. The research done in this chapter is on the highest level.

In the final analysis, *Glory Bound* is a great read for students, scholars, and the general public who have deeper interests in black athletes and the struggle in

America. Wiggins does make some questionable conclusions about black athletes, the revolt of the 1960s, and how black student-athletes felt at the time about white coaches. My question to Wiggins is how could white coaches be the scapegoat when black student-athletes are exploited systematically? Also, the lack of analysis on black women in sport will surely be criticized by some. Outside of Althea Gibson and Wyomia Tyus, we hear nothing of the impact that Wilma Rudolph and other black female athletes had during the civil rights struggle. Nonetheless, Wiggins should be commended for his stellar research, clear writing style, and insights into black athletes and their participation in American sport. The biographical essay by Wiggins at the end is a treat for all of us and leads us in many directions in the quest for knowledge. A must read.

—C. KEITH HARRISON  
*University of Michigan*