

Levinson, David and Karen Christensen, eds. *The Encyclopedia of World Sport*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. xvii + 488. Bibliographic references, index. \$19.95.

The Encyclopedia of World Sport takes on the massive task of encapsulating international sporting cultures, practices and histories, from all regions of the world, within one portable tome. Compiling the work of some 150 authors from fifteen countries and six continents was no small task in itself, and the results are impressive. The editors justify the development of this reference work by referring to the essential role that sport performs in a society: "Sports bring peoples and nations together. They create a shared language, shared passions; they highlight our aspirations and values, our ways of interacting with one another, and our appreciation of competition, achievement and adventure" (xv). Although one might disagree with the editors' claim that basketball and soccer (football) are more universally known, and loved, than any religion or food (xvii)—what of bread and Islam?—one cannot deny the important place of sport.

Entries range from expected topics such as baseball, soccer and doping, to the more obscure barrel jumping, camogie (Ireland's national field sport for women) and takraw (a Southeast Asian ball game). Unsurprisingly, there is a distinctly Western flavor to the volume. Although the encyclopedia reviews more than just mainstream European sport, comprising a large section on traditional sports which explores Asian, Pacific Island, and indigenous experiences and practices, it does so through a colonial lens. With few exceptions, its contributors are Westerners; the content reflects Western values and beliefs; and the books language (English) targets a Western readership.

For whom is this book written? Not necessarily sport scholars—though they will quickly recognize its utility, if they need to determine quickly the difference between a ruck, a maul or a scrum, for example, or to understand a reference to the Scottish game of "shinty." This work is also an excellent resource for nonspecialists: a local newspaper that wants to explore the debate over the banning of skateboards; a college student preparing an essay on crowd psychology; a ninth grader who wants to know if there really *was* a Jamaican bobsled team. *The Encyclopedia of World Sport* can answer all these questions, and this is surely why any library, sport fan, or sportscholar should have a copy readily on hand.

The index is complete, and well cross-referenced. The individual entries, however, do not provide the same coherent links as does the index. To take an example, we might follow the trail of references in the interesting entry on aggression. It leads the reader logically to "violence," then nudges her to explore "rugby union," "soccer," and "spectators." What of boxing, American football, bullfighting, ice hockey, buzkashi (goat dragging), the ancient Olympic Games, and legal aspects of violence? The cross references within this article, at least, refer more to the individual authors' areas of expertise than to the overlap in other subject areas clearly flagged in the index. One should therefore rely heavily on the index and recognize the potential limitations of the in-text cross references.

One final limitation of the encyclopedia is the mismatch between the editors' stated philosophy and the final product. Levinson and Christensen announce that there are three

ways of thinking about the connection between sport and society: that sport is a reflection of institutions in a particular society; that sport is a symbolic expression of core values; or that sport is an agent of social change. Yet, the entries do not necessarily reflect this theoretical organization. In fact, a number devote inordinate space to “Rules and Play,” and few entries make reference to institutions, values or change. Those that do so manage with aplomb, such as Duncan Humphries’ entry on snowboarding and William Baker and S.W. Pope’s very thorough review of basketball. Had these ideas been the driving force behind all of the individual entries, the work might have had more coherence as a whole. However, one might also argue—correctly, I believe—that theoretical consistency would have limited, rather than enhanced, the collection of such a diverse range of subjects and such a vast collection of authors. I suggest that the editors erred, albeit mildly, in staking such categorical claims when, in fact, the diversity of connections between sport and society, well beyond the three they enunciate, typifies and constitutes one of the strengths of this reference work.

—ANNEMARIE JUTEL
University of Otago

McComb, David G. *Sports: An Illustrated History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Pp. 139. Illustrated. Bibliographies, chronology, further reading, index. \$25.00 cb.

In his book *Sports: An Illustrated History*, David McComb explores the multifaceted field of sports history beginning with a global survey of sports in early civilization and continuing through modern sports in North America. McComb designed the book as an overview appropriate for adolescent to adult readers, balancing a concise 129 pages of text with illustrations and eleven sidebars to provide a “starting place for anyone interested in the global development of sports” (7). In addition to this expansive scope, McComb also incorporates a broad range of information. The main narration identifies the origin of each sport, the evolution of key rules, the rise of professional sports organizations, and key individual and team performances. Also woven into the text are brief passages on many of the overarching issues discussed by sports academics: cultural, political, and religious beliefs promoting or demoting sports; geographic influences; how sport is used as a metaphor; racial and gender inequalities in participation; the rise of media coverage; and equipment innovations. Although overshadowed by the main narrative, these passages contain important aspects of sports interpretation and scholarship.

The content of *Sports: An Illustrated History* is not new to sports enthusiasts or historians, but the well-illustrated format and narrative style is appealing for novice readers. McComb bases the content and organization on the labor of many well-researched and -documented sources. In the preface McComb credits the works of David Levinson and Karen Christensen’s *Encyclopedia of World Sports* (see above—*ed.*), Graeme Wright’s *Rand McNally Illustrated Dictionary of Sports*, and the Diagram Group’s *Rules of the Game*, and provides a listing of additional key sources in the appendix. However, the broad scope and organization of McComb’s work requires brevity and generalizations at the cost of some clarity and presentation.