

Smith, Lissa (ed.). *Nike Is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998. Pp. xix + 331. Illustrated. Notes, bibliography. \$24.00 cb, \$15.00 pb.

Former Stanford basketball star Mariah Burton Nelson introduces this powerful anthology by inviting the reader to consider “who we might become,” and compels one to listen to this story of women in sports, because it is “a personal story, [and] because nothing is more personal than a woman’s sinew, sweat, and desire, and a political story, because nothing is more powerful than a woman’s struggle to run free” (ix). Nelson artfully weaves together important historical moments and epochs in women’s athletics set against the backdrop of strong political tides such as women’s liberation, feminism, and a federal law called Title IX. She reminds us all that, “we need to know about the politics of sport... without it we can’t really know who we are, or where we’re going. And without it we can’t fully celebrate female strength and female victory” (xix). We are also reminded that less than 10 percent of all sportswriters are women.

The fact that *Nike Is a Goddess* was penned by writers from such mainstream publications as *Women’s Sports and Fitness*, *The Washington Post*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The New York Times*, *Conde Nast’s Sports for Women*, and *The Miami Herald* lends even more credibility to an already solid anthology. Lissa Smith has gathered together thirteen women, and they represent some of the best sportswriters in the nation today. Like the women athletes they write about, they have succeeded in a very competitive arena—the media—and they have won, despite discrimination and opposition along the way. They chronicle the struggles and the victories, the battles and the accomplishments, and the societal and political changes that have permeated some twenty different sports.

Separate chapters, each about twenty pages long, document the athletic achievements of female athletes during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Sport by sport, the histories of incredible women athletes are brought to light. Powerful narratives inspire, document, instruct, motivate, and pay tribute. Much of what is unveiled in *Nike Is a Goddess* borders on revelation. Much like the Goddess Nike herself, it is the story of victory, and this book has wings of its own. It takes the reader to new heights, so one can view the past and the present from new perspectives. At times, moments in history are described so vividly that one can almost hear voices cheering, hands clapping, lungs gasping for air, and time standing still. Dynamic narratives pay tribute to the athletes who led the way in such sports as golf, tennis, basketball, baseball and softball, track and field, soccer, swimming, equestrian events, ice hockey, skiing, figure skating, gymnastics, and water sports such as canoeing, kayaking, rowing, and sailing.

Heroes emerge in every chapter. Melanie Hauser tells the story of golf and introduces Babe DidriksonZabarias. Billie Jean King is highlighted as Grace Lichtenstein walks us through the history of women and tennis. Kathleen McElroy captures our imagination as she reminds us of track stars like Joan Benoit, the first woman to win an Olympic marathon, and Jackie Joyner-Kersey, who excelled at not just running, but in the seven-event, two-day heptathlon.

This anthology also describes a number of lesser-known superstars, both past and present. Top women athletes who were boundary breakers are chronicled, such as Ernestine

Bayer from the world of rowing; Dana Chladek, who won the bronze in the whitewater kayaking slalom event at the 1992 Olympics; Amy Chapman Kleinshrodt and Betsy Alison, who left indelible marks in the world of sailing; Julie Croteau in baseball; the women's ice hockey team that won the Olympic gold medal in 1998; gutsy skiers such as Betty Woolsey who skied in the first Olympic event for women, and more recent stars like Suzy Chaffee, Tamara McKinney, and Picabo Street; and free style and mogul skiers such as Donna Weinbrecht and Nikki Stone.

Each essay is a joy to read. The front and back inside covers provide a time line, beginning in 776 BC and ending in 1998. Each chapter includes three small black-and-white photos; if anything should be changed about this book, it could use more and larger photographs. The text, however, is so rich and descriptive that this minor shortcoming does not limit the impact of this historical treasury. While these essays are profiles driven, they also reveal the political realities and cultural nuances present at the time. These women writers have moved beyond the usual and commonplace, resulting in the commemoration of an important chapter in American history; one never before documented in such a dramatic fashion.

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Davidson, Scooter Toby and Valerie Anthony, editors. *Great Women in the Sport of Kings: America? Top Women Jockeys Tell Their Stories*. Sports and Entertainment series. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999. Pp. xxv + 132. Illustrated. Notes, appendix, glossary. \$27.95 cb.

Scooter Toby Davidson and Valerie Anthony interviewed ten women jockeys about their lives and careers on the track. By asking each the same questions, the interviewers elicit answers that form both a pattern of similar responses and unique viewpoints.

Sandy Schleiffers, the first woman to be admitted to the Jockey's Guild, reminisces in the book's foreword about breaking the gender barrier in 1969. Mary Jo Festle's introduction places the book in context of the history of female athletes and of horse racing in the United States. Just like African-American athletes being held to a higher standard—not equal to but better than their white counterparts—the pressure on the first generation of women jockeys precluded them from making any mistakes that would jeopardize their careers and that of future women jockeys. The second generation, interviewed for this book, has attained a high level of success in a fiercely competitive profession.

Each woman discusses growing up, how she became a jockey, difficulties and triumphs in her career, advice to young girls wanting to become jockeys, and her social life. The jockeys' individuality shines through the somewhat repetitive of the format.

The women, from backgrounds both privileged and poor, share in common a love for animals, an interest in their own physical fitness, and an ability to communicate with people as well as horses. For a majority of them their social lives revolve around the track.