

DONNELLY, PETER, ED. *Taking Sport Seriously: Social Issues in Canadian Sport*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1997. Pp. 351. Illustrated. Notes. US\$24.95 pb.

ROBINSON, LAURA. *She Shoots, She Scores: Canadian Perspectives On Women And Sport*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1997. Pp. 235. Illustrated. Appendices. US\$19.95 pb.

Peter Donnelly and Laura Robinson, two authors committed to improving sport and its accessibility to a wider range of participants, utilize a social-issues-based approach and present “packages” of readings in their respective books, *Taking Sport Seriously Social Issues in Canadian Sport* and *She Shoots, She Scores: Social Issues in Canadian Sport*. The idea of “taking sport seriously” is part of a broader political battle that has been waged in academic circles for decades, and the relative absence of work on Canadian women’s experiences in sport further indicates the disciplinary marginalization process in mainstream history and sociology. These books consist, for the most part, of previously published work taken from periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, and thus may not convince traditional academics to take sport more seriously. Much more important, however, is the value of texts such as these that begin to fill a void in the source material available to Canadian undergraduate students studying sport.

Robinson identifies physical education, journalism, and social science students as her target audience, while Donnelly’s book is intended to supplement undergraduate sociology of sport texts. Both books are arranged to raise particular social issues about sport, and are less academically structured than Hall, Slack, Smith, and Whitson’s *Sport in Canadian Society*. Compared to Le Clair’s *Winners and Losers: Sport and Physical Activity in the 90s*, both are more critical in their approach to sport, and Donnelly’s collection provides a more extensive scope. As course texts, and only as a supplement to such texts as Hall *et al.* or Jay Coakley’s *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, Robinson’s book would best serve as a starting point for class discussions but only alongside a number of academic articles which elaborate significantly on the issues she raises. Donnelly’s book is better suited to the undergraduate audience.

Robinson, a sport journalist, has arranged a collection of her published articles from a variety of magazines, from *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* newspapers, and has included a number of unpublished pieces. Robinson’s work in general is critically-based and outside of traditional sport journalism, a welcome alternative to the usual fair. To a mainstream audience, her articles expose the invisibility of women’s athletics in the Canadian media and address important issues in sport such as sexual harassment, athlete abuse, eating disorders, violence, racism, and athlete safety. One of the strengths of the book is its appendices, with material on women’s sport, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, gender equity, harassment policy, and an excellent section on available written and video resources.

Because of the length of her articles, which is appropriate for newspapers and magazines, there is no room for the elaboration of some very complex issues. There are 55

articles packed into 182 pages of text including numerous full- and half-page photographs and brief introductions. The majority of articles are two pages in length, and other than some useful but brief statements of analysis, do not get beyond raising the issues at hand.

Conversely, some of the interview material is outstanding and brief quotes from Robinson's subjects provide exactly the substance necessary to stimulate the interest of undergraduate students. Track athlete Hassiba Boulmerka's statements, for example, about the persecution of women and the relationship between media representations of femininity and corporate sponsorship are both gripping and precise (19). Yet, as is often the case in the book, the brevity of material providing social context to the issue and the lack of explanation about connections made to Canadian female athletes limits the effectiveness of the article. Perhaps a more thorough introduction to each piece or expanded editorial text between sections of the book would help to clarify the links between articles and the common or related issues that they raise.

The lack of foundational analysis of these fundamental problems in sport may create difficulties for students in resolving some of the seeming contradictions; students may lack the familiarity with the literature that is necessary to grasp points that are often quickly and starkly offered. In "The Yellow Jersey," for example, Robinson writes about male violence towards women generally, and more specifically about safety concerns for female athletes. She begins by saying, "I no longer ride my bike on lonely country roads" (90). Yet, four pages later in "Self Esteem Can't Be Bought", she describes experiences of self-empowerment through sport stating that, "I think it's doing things like riding your bike in unknown territory that truly are empowering... It has been exploring places on my bike or skis that has set me free" (94). Some discussion elaborating the nuances of the arguments about empowerment and disempowerment would provide clarity to the articles. Without supporting literature, undergraduate readers will have trouble understanding the relationship between "violence lust" and homoeroticism (95) or the idea of "negative male-bonding" (97). Further, it is difficult to address the connections between soccer equity, ethnicity, male-bonding, and genital mutilation attempted in "Misogyny" in a page-and-a-half article.

There is no doubt that Robinson's work is important and, from a categorical standpoint, raises many issues that are vital to understanding sport in Canadian culture. Indeed, Robinson treads confidently into territories where other journalists have cowered. If the book was written for students, however, one has to question its format and organization. Moreover, if it is not introduced with some care, its important messages will be missed or rejected by many students.

The organizational framework, introductory remarks to each section, and references to other sources make Donnelly's book more appropriate as a supplementary undergraduate text. Donnelly has collected articles written by columnists, sportswriters, and academics and arranged them into twelve sections on sport issues. The articles range in length from two to thirteen pages; consequently, issues are addressed from a limited extent in some, and with much greater depth and breadth of analysis in others. As in Robinson's book, the discussions about the Olympics, drugs, violence, injury, sexuality, media, and other topics are pertinent and germane to introductory sociology of sport classes. The problem of brevity which limits the analytical and social context in Robinson's book,

however, is minimized through one- to three-page introductions which preface each reading and frame the issues in a practical fashion. Also, students will find a great deal of Canadian content in Donnelly's book and the same sort of critical stimulation to pique interests.

Brief but engaging journalistic pieces such as Philip White's "Muscles Don't Make the Man," mixed with longer, more academic articles like "Swimming with the Big Boys?" by Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, and the moving story of baseball player Glenn Burke, by Steve Wilstein, will provide interesting and accessible, yet challenging reading for most students.

Donnelly identifies a minor skirmish with American media domination of Canadian culture as part of the selection process for the book. As Donnelly acknowledges, such content is entrapped in what that same media projects as being socially important: professional, corporate, and "elite" sport. Subsequent editions perhaps will direct further attention to Canadian politics, regional and local identities, broad-based participation, government policies, the body culture industries, physical education, and French-English issues.

Donnelly argues that these articles "signal the success and influence of the sociology of sport" (12), and that sociologists question whether their work reaches beyond the population of students and academics who read it. Robinson's and Donnelly's collections both represent good signals. But books of this style reveal the somewhat ambivalent publishing process. On the one hand, professors will be thrilled to include a package such as this on their course reading lists; on the other hand, unfortunately, and through no fault of the authors, the style speaks volumes about the current business of publishing through which companies seek to capitalize on increasingly large, introductory undergraduate classes, ensuring maximum sales and a readership that turns over every year.

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