

McClellan, Keith. *The Hero Within Us: A History of Track and Field in the Twentieth Century From a Michigan Perspective*. Oak Park, Michigan: Eastern Michigan Press, 2001. Pp. 668 pp. + 89 pp. of notes. Appendices, index. \$24.00 pb.

When first asked to review this book I browsed through it and it quickly seemed to be a long narrative simply telling story after story of track and field feats by Michigan athletes. I was a bit puzzled as it did not seem in keeping with the usual socio-political tome review in *Journal of Sport History*. But when I sat down to read it in full, I quickly realized I had been wrong and the book contained much more than I had at first supposed.

McClellan's introduction seems to support my original inkling, noting, "This narrative is very much concerned with preserving and understanding a part of the record of Michigan's track and field experience in the past century, and not in proving a thesis." But the book becomes much more than simply that. In fact, it discusses many of the sociological problems that have embroiled sports since the late 19th century, although briefly, mostly noting their effect on Michigan sports. The prologue hints that more than McClellan's simple narrative will occur. Entitled "The Roots for Modern Track and Field," it discusses the origins of the sport in the 19th century, and the early political controversies affecting it. He does note near the end of the prologue that the book centers on 200 male and 45 female Michigan track and field athletes, stating, "[This] reflects the difference in the period of time male and female athletes were involved in interscholastic and intercollegiate track and field in Michigan during the twentieth century."

If one has any doubt that McClellan has skimmed on the socio-historical aspect to write simply rote statistics, they need read no further than the book's opening paragraph, which discussed the "elitist sports movement" entitled amateurism, and its origins. From there, McClellan discusses amateurism in nice detail. It is in no way a comprehensive approach to that problem but provides neophyte readers of the topic a good background. Within that first chapter, racial and religious discrimination in sports is also discussed. Of Fielding Yost, the early legendary University of Michigan football coach, it is noted, "[He] never even allowed an African-American athlete to tryout for the football team" during his tenure as coach . . . and made no apologies or explanations." And further, "Under Yost's leadership as Athletic Director, the University of Michigan also disdained competition with Catholic colleges, such as Notre Dame."

The book is a long one, but it was a good, interesting read, and I never felt pressed to finish it. It has 22 chapters, many of which break off the simple narrative of track and field feats, with titles such as "The Nazis Use the Olympics to Promote Racism," "The Struggle Against the English Amateur," "A Foreign Invasion by Invitation of Don Canham," "Black Lightning," and "Women Running Things." These discuss, respectively, the controversy surrounding the 1936 Olympic Games, the problem of amateurism and hypocrisy, the controversy about foreign athletes attending American colleges on sports scholarships, and the difficulty blacks and women had in this country being allowed equal access to sporting opportunities. Through it all, these stories are told with a "Michigan perspec-

tive,” as McClellan focuses specifically on the effects these topics had on Michigan sports and athletes.

The Hero Within Us begins by telling the story of Michigan’s early forays in international track and field, notably the 1900 Olympic Games. From there, the story is told chronologically. While reading I was immediately struck that there seemed to be fewer and fewer stories to tell as he approached the 21st century. McClellan realizes this and notes correctly that it is because of track and field’s diminishing importance in the sports landscape in this country. In the early 20th century, it was one of the most popular sports in the country, and many Michigan athletes starred internationally. But especially at the University of Michigan and Michigan State, football and basketball are now king, and track and field is consigned to the back pages of the sports section.

Although the two largest universities in Michigan are mentioned frequently, many other sources of athletic talent receive full attention. Notably, Wayne State University has produced many top track and field athletes, and the story of how this began (first as the City College of Detroit and then as Wayne University) under the guidance of coach David Holmes is fully told. Among club teams, the Detroit Police have contributed many top athletes to national and international competition, and they receive McClellan’s full attention.

The book is copiously referenced, with most chapters having over 100 footnotes. Furthermore, the research that McClellan did in local newspapers to produce this book appears to have been exhaustive. How else to explain the references in Chapter 21 to the *Toledo Blade*, *Ypsilanti Press*, *Ann Arbor News*, *Livonia Observer Eccentric*, *Akron Beacon Journal*, and the *Taylor Public Schools Alumni Directory 1996*?

As to criticisms, I had precious few. My original concerns that it would be superficial and statistical only were quickly allayed. It is a bit long at over 700 pages including references, and one should not attempt to swallow it at one sitting.

It has been said that all politics is local, and likely the same can be said of history. I have a number of these local sporting histories—one on Olympians from Manchester, England, one on Winter Olympians from Western Ontario—and I always enjoy them a great deal. The authors have to write as a labor of love only, for they know they will not reach a wide audience with their very parochial topic. But the detail and the effort involved seems to reflect the authors’ commitment to tell the story of deserving athletes who will otherwise be little remembered. While not true of every athlete in this book, as several of them are quite famous, Keith McClellan has preserved their story and produced a very well done book.

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