

Sports History and the Television

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Any professional historian is bound to feel frustrated in dealing with T.V. programme-makers. Television-obviously deals with images and tends to use very few words. Hence the subtlety (and verbosity) of writers has to be sacrificed to the imperative of sharp, fast-moving dialogue and images. It is extremely difficult to make good television from history (except at extreme cost of reconstruction for example). Moreover, what appears to be a good idea for a programme/series, is often rejected by film makers. Even when commissioned, the historian's idea is so mediated by a production team that the end result might bear only a passing resemblance to the original idea. At heart, professional history and TV work is a matter of conflicting styles and purposes. Not surprisingly, those TV historical films which succeed are rare, and generally unpredictable.