

Journal Reviews

Richard C. King, "Staging the Winter White Olympics: Or, Why Sport Matters to White Power," Journal of Sport and Social Issues 31, no. 1 (2007), 89-94. Reviewed by Megan Popovic.

In this paper, Richard King explores the symbiotic relationship between the Olympic Games and the expressions and celebration of White power. He focuses on how the 2006 Torino Olympics are placed on a pedestal by White supremacists, White separatists, and White nationalists and are epitomized as an ultimate symbolic performance of White dominance on the global stage. King contextualizes the 2006 Winter Olympics, or "White Olympics," within the broader history of the Olympic Movement and the current resurgence of overt expressions of White power in popular media outlets.

King asserts that the Modern Olympic Games are shrouded in vestments sown with imperialistic and racist threads since their inception. While the Games are often professed as celebrations of unity, diversity, and peace, the author makes explicit that these proclaimed consequences promulgate from a Eurocentric core. The European roots of the selected Olympic events, the nationalities of the majority of participants and organizers (particularly before the 1964 games), the ceaseless rationalization of sport, and the selection of host nations typically within the "Western World" are the prime examples used by King to illustrate the tenets of this core. These aspects continue to serve as a foundation upon which racialized assumptions about human difference and White power emanate. Moreover, King explains how the ideological legacies left by Olympic pioneers like Pierre de Coubertin, such as the belief in the superiority of Europeans and sport's ability to transform "lesser," unrefined, and uncivilized peoples of Africa and Asia, are utilized to bolster the argument of "why sport matters to White power."

In the second portion of this article, King focuses on contemporary interpretations of how the 2006 Torino Games exemplified the superiority of Whiteness. He identifies several main groupings of claims from online web sites that demonstrate the supposed link between assertions of White power and how the Games confirmed these beliefs. For instance, King highlights how discussants celebrate the successes of White athletes as a reclamation of this international sporting event, the implicit "race wars" that occurred amidst athletic competition, and how the games are believed to reflect White peoples' evolutionary positioning and ability to manifest their inherent destiny. He extends this reasoning further by elaborating on White power claims about the anti-White media bias, with their "usual pc-multi-culti-BS" and efforts to "denigrate, dismiss, or

demonize [the games]" (p. 91). King also recognizes the deep-rooted insecurities and fears amongst White power enthusiasts in their efforts to establish and reinforce racial boundaries through sport. He concludes with an acknowledgment of how sport serves as a forum for the interplay of race and power myths, and how the 2006 games acted as a safe space for White power advocates to espouse "truths" of racial superiority.

Although King provides a thought-provoking, alternative reading of the Olympic Games and their power to reinforce, rather than extend, racial boundaries, I believe there are several fundamental, problematic issues concerning the paper. First, and most importantly, King does not formulate a strong statement of purpose from which to base the rest of his paper. Early on King states that his intention is to explore why sport matters to White power in two ways: by showing how Western imperialism was infused into the development of contemporary sporting worlds, and by highlighting contemporary preoccupations of White power. However, this purpose does not reflect the discussion that follows. The majority of the paper focuses on the historical development of the Olympic games specifically, with its lingering expressions of White power, and then abruptly shifts to claims by White power advocates in relation to the outcomes of the 2006 Torino games. It would have served King better to have delimited his very broad statement of purpose to reflect his more narrow focus and subsequently to then reinforce his intentions continually throughout the paper. This would have fostered a direct lineage of thought for the reader and wrap this "more suggestive than exhaustive" (p. 90) paper into a coherent package of ideas.

A second major critique is the consistent lack of flow in this article. For instance, King provides a brief review of the Eurocentric core of the Olympic games, linking it to the colonial model and White man's burden to improve the Other, then writes a verbose, seemingly random, one-sentence paragraph coupling the past to the White power media complex and the 2006 games. He states, "Of course, these legacies of more overt expressions of White power linger – in the color commentary, the kind and quality of opportunities to athletes around the world, and the popular imagery – think Cool Runnings – establishing the conditions for producing and consuming Torino" (p.91). In the subsequent, two-sentence paragraph King first clarifies how the variations of the White power movement are inspired by historic assumptions of human difference, with the second sentence simply stating, "Online discussion clarifies why sport matters now" (p.91). Not only does this selection illustrate the disjointed nature of King's article, it points to the lack of attention paid to writing quality. Furthermore, in addition to experiencing a feeling of sitting in conceptual rush-hour traffic while reading this article, I feel that the selected ethnographic data is poorly utilized within the paper, thus contributing to the paper's substandard readability. King constructs his paper with powerful, risky quotes from myriad White power web

sites, yet fails to complement these texts with clear thematic groupings, creative introductions to the quotes, and compelling analysis of the texts.

On a more positive note, I appreciate the colourful usage of phrases that King brings into play throughout his paper. For instance, King states that his intention to understand why sport matters derives from an uncovering of the “more veiled expressions of White power” (p.90) and later he writes about the “illusory supremacy of Whiteness” and the White power belief that “anti-White gatekeepers work to ridicule, malign, and silence” (p.93). In reflection, I feel that these terminological threads—veil, illusion, silence—could have been woven further into the metaphorical tapestry of King’s paper to evoke and deepen the emotion associated with such a powerful topic. Overall, this article contributes to the critical analysis of the Olympic Movement, particularly the interrelatedness of the Games with race, power, and culture.



Stephen Wassong, “Pierre De Coubertin’s Studies In and About the USA,” Journal of Olympic History 13 (2006), 31-37. Reviewed by Toby Rider.

Looking beyond the standard premise that Coubertin’s sojourns in the U.S. were for the purpose of attracting “support for the Olympic project,” Wassong draws some alternative conclusions with the help of some important sources that he asserts had been previously neglected. He builds his case on letters between Coubertin and “certain people” in the U.S., articles the Baron had published on the U.S., and two books: *Universités transatlantiques* and *Souvenirs d’Amérique et de Grèce*. In an effort to redirect those preoccupied with Coubertin’s Olympic ideals, Wassong suggests looking at the potential shaping of the Baron’s “educational thinking” following his visits to the U.S., and how they may have influenced his later thoughts.

Covering the necessary background to Coubertin’s eventual Olympic zenith, Wassong briefly discusses the Baron’s admiration for the public schools of England and the ability of those famous institutions to nurture “traits such as honesty, team work, willingness to compromise, self assertion and consistency,” and, more specifically, how the extra curricula sporting activities organized by the students were the key to this process. Coubertin had decided that the English public school ideology should be transferred to the educational system of France. After having his proposal rebuffed by the powers that be in his home country, Wassong contends that the Baron sought more evidence to sway the minds of his countrymen by visiting the New World for “stimuli for his educational reform.” We learn that Coubertin had first visited the U.S. in 1889 and carried out research on the schools and universities by way of questionnaires. In the Baron’s opinion, he found that the extra-curricular activities in the high schools and universities were a fundamental part of forming competent future citizens. Crucially, howev-

er, Wassong highlights what amounted to a biased vision from the Baron. Forever focused on the supportive evidence of his view, he neglected to document the negative aspects of the U.S. schools, such as the professionalism that detracted from the broader aims of education. Wassong explains that the Baron's perfumed view of the high schools was derived from his experiences at the Ivy League colleges, which, Yale apart, "strived to keep student sport untainted with professionalism." Wassong claims that in his efforts to convince the French authorities to change, it inspired in him a certain flexibility with the truth.

For Wassong, the experience and pleasure that Coubertin derived from his trips to the U.S. became manifest in his efforts to narrow the widening gulf in attitude between the "old" and "new world." Wassong argues that Coubertin foresaw the burgeoning power of the U.S. as a political monolith. As a result, he aimed to promote mutual understanding between France and the United States by writing on the subject and, with the help of his Ivy League contacts, encouraging students to do the same by creating essay competitions. It is this involvement in smoothing international relations, contends Wassong, that must be considered when looking for reasons as to the Baron's determined call for the rebirth of the Olympics.

Very convincing it all is too. Without having consulted the new material that Wassong draws on it is hard to be critical of his study, taken at face value it is compact and executed efficiently. As MacAloon demonstrated in his consummate study of Coubertin, the Baron's life makes for a rich source of research, a life thoroughly well lived aside from his often tragic private life. Wassong's work adds more depth to prior knowledge of the motivating factors behind Coubertin's visits to the U.S., and therein lies its obvious value.



Andrew Novak, "Rhodesia's 'Rebel and Racist' Olympic Team: Athletic Glory, National Legitimacy and the Clash of Politics and Sport," International Journal of the History of Sport 23, no. 8 (2006), 1369–1388. Reviewed by Stephen Swain.

In this article, Novak examines the history of Rhodesia's involvement in the Olympic Games, and traces the debates and controversies surrounding the country's participation, or lack thereof. Applying Weber's "threefold typology of pure forms of legitimate authority," Novak categorizes De Coubertin, and later Brundage, as "a charismatic leader" and the International Olympic Committee as a "charismatic organization, outside the mere moral world of the ordinary." As such, both the IOC and its leader seek to maintain the concept of Olympism in the face of external forces attempting to bring change to the world.

As a history and narrative, Novak's article is noteworthy, providing a well researched and documented account of the different factors involved in the controversies surrounding Rhodesia's participation in, and exclusion from, the

Olympic Games. In addition, Novak also provides excellent discussion of the importance of sport in Rhodesian society, both before and after the country's acrimonious split from Great Britain. Of particular interest is Novak's discussion of how sports were not segregated in Rhodesia as they were in South Africa the "neighbor country" also under sanction and scrutiny over segregationist racial politics at the time.

Novak discusses several important historical moments in his article, among them, the pressure to exclude Rhodesia from the 1968 Mexico City Games. These Games will be forever remembered both for the protests of John Carlos and Tommie Smith, immortalized on posters on dorm room walls of young progressive sports fans, and the Tlatelolco massacre that took place less than two weeks before the Games opened. Novak discusses the political manoeuvrings that led to Rhodesia's exclusion and the differences of opinion and approach between the Mexican NOC and the IOC.

Following the 1968 Games, Novak also addresses the 1972 Munich Games, again immortalized in history for massacre and controversy, rather than sporting achievement. In addition to discussing the politics involved in excluding Rhodesia, Novak also discusses how these events led to the end of Brundage's control over the IOC. Again, Novak renders a viable understanding of the controversies and debates over Rhodesia's participation.

In addition to discussing the political manipulation surrounding Rhodesia, Novak also brings the issue down to the level of the individual, discussing the athletes themselves, and the effects that Rhodesia's exclusion had on them. This strengthens an already strong article. It seems as if a nation's shortcomings must be attached to a real individual, the Olympic athlete, in order to accelerate concerns over social justice.

Perhaps my strongest criticism of Novak's article concerns his discussion of how Olympism, and the Olympic Games, were envisioned as being free from politics. It is unclear whether Novak is being ironic in discussing this, or if he is merely reiterating what others believed. While men like De Coubertin and Brundage may have chosen to delude themselves into believing the Olympics were apolitical, it does not make it so. The Olympics have always been political. Their very origin lies in the highly politicized notion of the modern nation-state. Beyond that, issues of the participation of women are examples of gender politics. Even the selection of an Olympic Games host city is an example of politics in action. To claim that the Olympics are free from politics is naïve at best and foolish at worst. Novak doesn't address this point, and while this may be a strategic decision on Novak's part, I feel that ignoring the political nature of the Olympics detracts from the paper.

Beyond that however, Novak has written a very strong paper. And perhaps most importantly, he has addressed how, while the decision to exclude Rhode-

sia certainly had a negative impact on the Rhodesian athletes at the time, it has now come to be seen as a positive benefit for athletes around the world. Novak also avoids grandiose proclamations that the Olympic Games ended apartheid, but he does acknowledge the importance of the Olympics in helping to affect change, if only in the Olympic Movement itself.



Brian Bridges, "Reluctant Mediator: Hong Kong, the two Koreas and the Tokyo Olympics," International Journal of the History of Sport 24, no. 3 (2007), 375-391. Reviewed by Terry Gitersos.

Brian Bridges recounts the fascinating story of the diplomatic efforts undertaken to present a united Korean team at the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. South Korea had participated in the Olympic Games since 1948 under the name "Korea;" North Korea's attempts to compete in the Games were continually rebuffed on the grounds that "there could not be more than one recognized NOC in any one country." Faced with a powerful eastern bloc agitating for North Korea's inclusion, IOC President Avery Brundage proposed sending a unified Korean team to Tokyo. In that regard, negotiations occurred in Hong Kong, a city that proved to be an extremely reluctant host. Hong Kong saw the presence of both North and South Korean delegations as an impingement on its security and neutrality. Bridges adroitly describes the diplomatic mine fields navigated by the main actors. After covert attempts by American diplomats to influence the proceedings, the talks broke down in the face of ideological and political squabbling. The IOC, in the end, recognized North Korea as a separate NOC, a decision which paved the way for a politically-tinged row in Tokyo between the IOC and North Korea over athletes who had participated in the "anti-imperialist" GANEFO games.

Despite its narrative strength, Bridges' article suffers from a damaging lack of focus and an underdevelopment of some crucial topics. The title makes direct reference to Hong Kong as a "reluctant mediator; the introduction promises to "examine the nature of Hong Kong's involvement in this complex and ultimately frustrating effort," but this is a work more concerned with the two Koreas and the intrigues surrounding the effort to produce a unified Korean Olympic team. Hong Kong remains a secondary actor. Hong Kong's geopolitical status during that era is not discussed other than to say that it was still a British colony, nor is it made clear why Hong Kong became the "agreed-on" meeting place for the Korean delegations. Bridges writes that Hong Kong was "wary of the role that had been thrust upon it." We learn that American diplomats attempted to intervene in the second meeting, but it is never made apparent what Hong Kong stood to gain or lose from these diplomatic machinations. Bridges only begins to delve into these topics during the conclusion, where we are finally introduced to Hong Kong as a neutral "Switzerland of Asia... steadily acquiring more au-

tonomy from London in their decision-making.” Hong Kong’s differences with London relating to the presence of North Korea in the territory are highlighted as “a small step forward in Hong Kong’s emerging national identity.” These are precisely the topics that should have been introduced in the introduction and examined throughout, but they unfortunately are barely mentioned until the very end when it is too late to properly expand upon them. While the article succeeds as a riveting account of cold war feuds and behind-the-scenes Olympic diplomacy, it largely fails as a narrative about Hong Kong, which is the expressed purpose of the article.



Andreas Niehaus, “‘If You Want to Cry, Cry on the Green Mats of Kodokan.’ Expressions of Japanese Cultural and National Identity in the Movement to Include Judo into the Olympic Programme,” International Journal of the History of Sport 23, no. 7 (2006), 1173-1192. Reviewed by Anne Warner.

In this article, Andreas Niehaus examines how the inclusion of judo into the Olympic Games helped to rehabilitate post-war perceptions of Japan and restore Japanese national identity after its defeat in the Second World War. He focuses on Japan’s quest to include judo as an Olympic event, which eventually came to fruition at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, marking the first time a non-European sport was included on the Olympic programme. In addition, Niehaus recounts the history and significance of judo in Japan including its subsequent internationalization and the Western construction of the sport.

The greatest strength of this article is its subject matter. It is refreshing to read an article about a lesser-known sport, such as judo, instead of typical Western sports that tend to be the focus of much research. While Niehaus proposes a potentially captivating premise for the paper, that is, that sport can be a mechanism for rehabilitating a nation, the article lacks organization and critical analysis in some key areas, leaving the reader confused and with several unanswered questions.

The primary confusion stems from a lack of connection between the main ideas of the paper. The paper begins with the assertion that the 1964 Olympics was a key date for the bolstering of Japanese national identity, as Japan was the host of the Games and dominated judo. However, Niehaus does not carry through with this idea in the paper. In fact, there is little discussion of the actual ’64 Games, how judo was received at these Games, or whether Japanese national identity was bolstered. Rather, the paper turns into a discussion about Western exoticization of judo and the eventual loss of Japanese control of the International Judo Federation. Niehaus’s intention is to show that the West recognized a spiritual or religious aspect to judo that was not part of traditional Japanese judo, creating conflict between world judo bodies. But, Niehaus fails to suffi-

ciently show the connection between this idea, and the initial discussion of the '64 Games, creating a disjointed paper that would be better off as two separate pieces.

In addition, Niehaus's work would have benefited from more critical analysis and the fleshing out of ideas that he touches on only briefly. For example, the paper begins with an historical account of judo's acceptance as a sport at the 1964 Olympics, but fails to answer why it took twelve years to get Judo admitted to the list of Olympic sports. It would seem that identifying these obstacles and how they were overcome are crucial to our understanding of attitudes toward Japan at that time. The reader is left wondering whether it was post-war antagonism, the newness of the Japanese Olympic Committee, or disinterest.

There certainly is a need to explore sports that are less "mainstream" in academic literature and thus Niehaus's research is significant. However, his failure to pursue his initially-stated premise means that his potentially thought-provoking points are lost in superficial and disconnected arguments.



Ann E. Cudd, "Sporting Metaphors: Competition and the Ethos of Capitalism," Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 2007, 52-67. Reviewed by Natalie Szudy.

In this article, Ann E. Cudd explores the use of common sporting metaphors as general descriptors to illustrate different attitudes towards capitalism. Specifically, she examines the relationship between competitive structures underpinning sport and capitalism. In this comparative analysis, Cudd focuses on the following sporting metaphors: i) competition; ii) level playing field; iii) playing by the rules; iv) teamwork; and v) stepping up/slam dunk. Fundamentally, Cudd argues that the nature of capitalism can be viewed as strictly competitive; however, through the exploration of sporting metaphors, capitalism could also be viewed as having a combination of cooperative and competitive themes.

To establish the connection between sporting metaphors and capitalism, Cudd begins by exploring the relationship between metaphors and cultural representations. She argues that metaphors provide another way of expanding how we analyze rule-governed practices in society. Cudd notes that metaphors are commonly used to draw parallels and comparisons from familiar behaviours and actions to help understand less familiar experiences. This claim is dependent on the argument that the cultural structures that underpin society are prevalent in sport and business practices. Cudd locates the connection between sport and capitalism by establishing that both practices are essentially rule-governed and competitive. The operational definitions of sport and capitalism included in the article support the comparison.

In the discussion of the sporting metaphors, Cudd includes an assessment of the meanings that these metaphors have in society. She notes that there is a large amount of ambiguity associated with these metaphors, but the underlying theme of competition and cooperation provide substantial support in guiding behaviour. Cudd ultimately argues that the discussion of these metaphors is another way of challenging the underlying rules governing cultural structures. An interesting parallel explored in this article is sporting metaphors that seem to illustrate competitive ventures but also demonstrate cooperative themes. An example of this is the metaphor of the level playing field. Although competition is considered in creating a level playing field, there is also cooperative involvement to contribute to a level of fairness. Cudd argues that by adhering to the goal of equality in competition, the pursuit of individual or team excellence involves the consideration of all those participating in the game. This relationship highlights the potential for positive interactions between individuals competing against one another.

A problem with the argument offered by Cudd is the loose distinction made between competition and cooperation. This parallel plays a large role in Cudd's argument that capitalism is not strictly competitive, but also has cooperative values. Although the sporting metaphors that Cudd examines fit with the discussion of capitalism, there are some questions as to whether drawing on these metaphors assists in demonstrating the ethos of capitalism. It may be possible that these sporting metaphors illustrate themes of cooperative behaviour that are based on the telos and underlying cultural structures of capitalism. The analysis of how the telos or, goals of capitalism compare with the goals of sport contests would have provided further depth to the connection between sporting metaphors and capitalism.

Overall, the exploration of sporting metaphors in connection to capitalism raises the question of how these metaphors can provide explanations of other social structures. The development of the connection between metaphors and culture provides an additional avenue of analysis that addresses the connection between sport and society.

