

Michael D. Smith, *Violence and Sport*. Butterworths, Toronto, 1983,
Index, references. pp.xiv+215.

Violence and sport is a highly topical and popular theme well

outside the boundaries of sport studies and sports history. Michael D. Smith has produced this useful text for undergraduate courses in sociology, social psychology and sports sciences. It is a clear, well-structured introduction to the theoretical and empirical issues raised by the study of violence in sport in modern societies, and though heavily influenced by North American research, it does draw on some United Kingdom and European work to provide some comparative perspective. It deals competently with the knotty definitional issues of what constitutes violence in sport, especially in high body contact games like ice hockey and gridiron football, leaving the reader with a clear sense of the contingency of most attempts at definition.

There is a brief overview of the history of violence associated with a range of human activities, some of which have been termed sports, from Roman circusses to mediaeval tournaments and Smith draws heavily on Elias and Dunning for his account of the civilising and legitimation of modern social, including sports, violence. Issues of gender, race and age as determinants of sports violence are canvassed and the social psychological perspective on personal violence is employed. A more sociological approach informs the sections on the influence of media on sports violence and the concluding chapters examine empirical and theoretical perspectives on sports crowd disorders and violence.

The book has great merits in its cool appraisal of many 'popular' explanations and justifications for sports violence, showing that 'non-explanations' abound in the literature. Some of the best sections are based on Smith's own sensitive work on the development of patterns and perceptions of violence among young hockey players, and one notes his observation that most sports participants grow out of violence, though they tend to do so a little later than their non-sports contemporaries.

In its emphasis on the multi-dimensional nature of sports violence and its causes, the book is a salutary warning to those who seek simple, quick and highly 'political' remedies to the social problems associated with modern sport. Unfortunately, it is not likely to become required reading for those who would most benefit from its study.

J. Roy Hay
School of Social Sciences
Deakin University