

John Goldlust, *Playing for Keeps: Sport, The Media and Society*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1987. Bibliog., Illus., index. pp.x+189, \$14.95 (paper).

Since the mid to the late 1970s increasing numbers of Australian academics have turned their attention and skills to the study and examination of sport. With a few notable exceptions most of this research has been dominated by historians who have welcomed and encouraged inter-disciplinary contributions. Generally speaking, few Australian sociologists have bothered to undertake sports research - a situation which can be contrasted with that of sociologists in other parts of the world. John Goldlust's *Playing for Keeps* constitutes only the second major contribution by an Australian sociologist on sport (known to this reviewer), and if only for this reason constitutes a welcome addition to the burgeoning Australian literature on sport.

Goldlust's major object is to examine the relationship between sport and the media, paying particular attention to the role of television. He writes from a (mild?) neo-Marxist or radical perspective arguing that television dominates sport (rules are changed to fit in with the demands of the medium), distorts the reality of sport for the viewer, and sport is simply a vehicle designed to sell consumer products. *Playing for Keeps* is very much in the same tradition as Sandercock and Turner's *Up Where Cazaly?* which criticised the increasing commercialisation associated with Australian rules football.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapters one and two provide historical and cross-cultural information on the emergence of and growth of competitive sport ranging from Aristotle and Plato, to Victorian England and the amateur tradition, the Turner or gymnasium movement in Europe, American sport and the cash nexus, and the role of sport in socialist societies. Chapter three provides a general and historical introduction to the sport mass media relationship. The next three chapters focus on the relationship between sport and television. Chapter four, which is probably the best chapter in the book, examines many of what might be called the technical problems associated with sports broadcasting, and examines television's packaging and/or presentation of sport. Chapter five concerns itself with broader political and sociological problems

associated with the sport television nexus; while chapter six examines how television's takeover of sport and its commodification using Australian cricket and football as case studies.

While Goldlust raises many interesting issues *Playing for Keeps* suffers three inter-related problems. First, there is a degree of repetition in the book and, at times, the presentation is somewhat disjointed. Second, while Goldlust's ostensible object is to examine the sport television relationship the provision of extra information of a historical cross-cultural type is somewhat unconvincing. Goldlust appears to have taken on board too many additional issues which require more thought and analysis. In addition, given the issues canvassed by Goldlust, the book is somewhat mistitled - *Sport and Sociology: A Survey* would appear to have been more appropriate. Third, Goldlust tends to rely mainly on overseas sociological writings for inspiration and direction. He has only made limited use of contributions provided by Australian authors who could have aided him in his endeavours. For example, he has not drawn on, nor does he seem to be aware of Sandercock and Turner's work, although their line of argument is similar to his own.

Notwithstanding these problems *Playing for Keeps* raises interesting questions which need to be considered by all of those who are involved in sports research. One also hopes that more Australian sociologists will follow Goldlust and initiate research into the numerous and various phenomena associated with Australian sport and television.

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