

Joan M. Chandler, *TELEVISION AND NATIONAL SPORT: THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1988. Index, notes. pp.xvi + 240. \$US24.95

I have read, with some degree of irritation, numerous studies on sport and television. They suffer from two main faults in my opinion. Too many authors find it convenient to blame television for all the supposed ills which afflict professional sport worldwide. There is also precious little historical perspective in most studies of the subject and as a result television is treated as a unique form of media.

This book, refreshingly from my perspective, avoids these pitfalls. Chandler takes the longer perspective and argues that games were being altered on a regular basis well before television and that the demands of television are one of a number of factors transforming sport in the last Century. Many of the changes wrought by television are not so novel because television executives have 'simply built on the commercial foundations already laid by the sports industry' (p.xi) rather than revolutionising sport.

Chandler also proceeds to attack one of the popular shibboleths that television, off its own bat as it were, is ruining sport. Those who push this argument ignore, for instance, that television has provided the fan with a truer text of the game. She argues that while radio commentators could construct an exciting game from a dull event, 'a dull game on television remains dull, however frantically the commentators work' (p.xii). Television has also helped to rip away some of sport's mystique, including some outmoded ideals, because television close-ups are merciless in revealing violence, lack of concentration and boorishness.

Television has exposed sport warts and all.

This then is a challenging book which attacks many previous theses about sports and television. It is also an ambitious study in that Chandler investigates broader issues about the relationship between sport and television along with specific differences between the United States and Britain. She also looks at the television treatment of five individual sports: baseball, (American) football, cricket, soccer and tennis.

The book documents the many differences in the presentation of sport on both sides of the Atlantic and suggests that there are significant national differences in the construction of sports programs such as how audiences read them, and the attitude of sports administrators towards television itself. Some of the comparisons are intriguing. British soccer administrators have been reluctant to make full use of television as a marketing device - - - few games are televised live - - - which has not been the case with American football. British tennis commentators chat far less than their American counterparts --- Chandler timed one Dan Maskell pause at 79 seconds --- and are more formal referring to female tennis players as 'Miss' or 'Mrs' Evert Lloyd rather than the more familiar American 'Chrissie'. Audience surveys reveal that while baseball and football are popular with males and females in the United States the female interest in cricket and soccer is much lower than the male in Britain.

Chandler argues, effectively in my opinion, that many of the differences between sports in the two societies --- the American 'sport as spectacle' versus the British 'sport as an event' --- were established well before television came along. To appreciate what television has inherited and what it has altered, Chandler explores the wider evolution of

sporting traditions in two countries.

Because this is a very ambitious book, painting a very big picture, it is not without its faults. Some of the assertions about the different traditions need more support and analysis. Chandler contends that British and North American audiences make 'different demands' on their respective television industries but the evidence of audience surveys, while fascinating, is not compelling. Can we assume that the viewers are getting what they want?

The section on television and individual sports contains material which is full of interest as it has long been obvious that some sports translate better than others on television. Some, too, such as tennis, are less costly to broadcast than others.

Chandler, unfortunately, loses her way at some points when dealing with the nuances of individual sports and television. She argues, for instance, that cricket should be an ideal television sport because it is not difficult for the cameras to follow the central action. 'But cricket, as a TV sport for the uninitiated', she contends, 'possesses some fatal flaws in that there are few predictable crises, the outcome is unpredictable, there are gaps in the game, and there is not enough action'. She adds that 'in test matches, the pace is so leisurely that it is almost impossible to translate it to a living-room setting, except for fans who are settling down exactly as they would at a game' (pp.125-6).

Such a cultural interpretation (which obviously draws solely on Chandler's observation of British television broadcasting) is fallacious when applied to cricket as a whole. Both Test and Limited Over cricket achieve very good ratings on commercial television in Australia for instance and attract an audience both of the initiated and uninitiated.

World Series Cricket was a result of the success of cricket on television.

This is a stimulating book which is recommended even if it raises more questions than it answers. I hope that more researchers will follow Chandler's lead and explore these important issues, the construction and consumption of sport on television.

Richard Cashman
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Marc Fiddian, *PONSFORD AND WOODFULL: A PREMIER PAR TNEERSHIP*, The Five Mile Press, Fitzroy, 1988. Bibliog., illus., index, stats., pp.152. \$29.95

Despite the title, which hints at a study of the first-wicket stands that this pair of highly successful batsmen compiled, this book is in fact a double biography of Bill Woodfull and Bill Ponsford. The lives of both men are meticulously traced from birth to the end of their playing days, with a short eight-page chapter, 'Life Moves On', quickly bringing the story up to date from the mid-1930s.

The cricket careers of 'the two Bills' are carefully recorded, both in the first-class and club cricket arenas, in chronological order, game by game. The potential monotony of match descriptions is avoided by snippets of information pertaining to developments in their respective private lives, such as marriage, birth of children, and details of employment. Occasionally, too, the narrative is punctuated by references to newsworthy events away from the cricket field, so that, for instance, we are made aware of the impact of the depression while Ponsford and