

**George B. Kirch**, *The Creation of American Team Sports: Baseball & Cricket, 1838-72*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989). pp. xiv + 277. US\$27.50

Kirch has written the first full length study of American cricket and its rivalry with baseball; in the process he provides a detailed social analysis of the rise of commercialised team sport in the United States. The book will be read avidly by the many fans of baseball among American historians, and by all sports historians in the United

States and hopefully elsewhere. Particularly interesting is the long and carefully constructed comparative history of the two summer ball games. Here Kirch shows that one does not have to compare countries to do comparative history, and to do it well. Also of interest will be the statistical material on the social origins of players in both sports; the pioneering study of spectatorship including some (brief) comments on the role of women; and an excellent range of photographs. Kirch has shown just how much source material there is on early team sports, and his coverage is comprehensive.

The study makes a strong contribution to empirical history; its interpretive base is less interesting. Kirch does not adopt a simplistic modernisation formula, and he carefully considers every factor in the rise of baseball. This analysis is balanced but less original than he suggests. The role of nationalism is discounted, while the structural differences between the sports, and patterns of class and ethnicity are taken more seriously. In the end, he agrees that baseball was a more flexible sport able to be adapted as American society modernised in the mid-nineteenth century. Cricket survived as an elite sport with an Indian summer in late nineteenth century Philadelphia, but baseball became the national game.

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