

Martin Barry Vinokur, *More than a Game. Sports and Politics*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 155. \$37.95

This book starts off with some unfortunate disadvantages: the first is that while the author uses Romania and East Germany for his argument, he can read neither German nor Romanian - nor would it appear any other language; the second is that recent events in both these countries render much of what he has to say about them irrelevant. The author also comes up with discoveries that will surprise few people: that politics is involved in sport, and that sport is more than just a game. Such a breathless conclusion comes only because of the author's apparent lack of knowledge of what has been written on the subject, the massive German output as well as the contributions in the Canadian, American and British journals of sports history. His researches could turn up only two types of sports books: anecdotal and sociological, while he was able to consult only a few issues of the *International Review of Sport Sociology*. Thus his comments on academic disregard of this hitherto lightly regarded topic reveal either a disconcerting ignorance or an incredibly narrow

definition of 'political science research'. Bravely he offers his own personal experience as an active sportsman and his visits to Romania and East Germany to help remedy this 'scholarly gap'.

The book, it has to be said, is most attractively presented, with numerous tables and diagrams, some of which are useful. Others will no doubt relish more than I did the author's painstaking explanations of his 'method' and gain more from concepts that I found confusing where they were not dressed up clichés. The argument is studded with references to secondary works (mainly sociology or physical education) to give scholarly respectability to such conclusions as: 'Women with a job, family, and household work are placed in an unfavourable position (in their leisure time), according to time-budget research' (p. 27). But the lack of historical depth sinks this book for me: when we are told that the 'role of government in sport is very extensive in the Communist block nations' (p. 109) and that the discovery of modern German sport began with Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (p. 61), as though these were remarkable new discoveries, it is difficult not to conclude that the author is working in an academic vacuum of his own making. Worse, the noted Soviet sport scholar, Jim Riordan, is quoted several times as the author of an article on East German sport when in fact the author of this article is David Child, Riordan being editor of the book. Whatever the wonders of sophisticated theory, it can never take the place of basic spade work.

Bill Murray

La Trobe University