

Steven A Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989. Illus., index, notes, pp. 332. \$US29.95.

This is a very large and challenging book in terms of the questions addressed and the considerable research territory covered. The book draws on and synthesises much of the recent North American research on the rise of organised sport in urban society. It is also a very ambitious book because Riess does not focus on a restricted time span or one city, as was the case with Adelman, Kirsch and others, but attempts to provide us with the big picture: the rise, fulfilment and changing character of organised sport in North American cities as a whole and the impact of sport on urban life and culture.

A central concern is how sport has been transformed by urbanisation. Riess suggests that this was a continuing and ongoing transformation as various metropolitan areas evolved from a walking city

(1820-70) to the industrial radial city (1870-1960) to the suburbanised metropolis (1945-80).

Particularly illuminating is what Riess has to say about sport and urban space. The availability of space for sport and access of sporting groups to it is a crucial issue in understanding the rise of organised sport. In the walking city there was plenty of undifferentiated space - vacant lots and quiet streets were available and the countryside was nearby. With the growth and spread of cities, land became more expensive and sought after. Sport slotted into the more highly specialised urban space: it consisted of public space (parks), semipublic space (enclosed ballparks) and private space (private golf clubs). Since World War II there have been further changes in the urbanisation-suburbanisation process with middle-class white migration to the suburbs and the expansion of racial ghettos in inner cities.

Another rich theme in this book is how sport catered for new urban communities providing a focal point for neighbourhoods, ethnic and suburban communities. Sport provided the meeting place for a host of emerging subcultures such as the bachelor subculture of the taverns, young single men who frequented the many pool rooms - which operated as workingmen's clubs - and the country golf clubs which provided an oasis of rustic life for the more affluent.

A strong feature of this book is the consideration of how sport is enmeshed with local power groups. In the post-1870 era sport became such an important business that politicians, businessmen and organised crime all competed to control and benefit from the rise of sport.

Riess argues effectively as well not only that sport was transformed in the urban environment but sport contributed itself to the shaping of urban life and the discourse on the character of urban life. Sport played a central role in continuing debates on the problem of urban slums, the youth problem, the need for more green space in built up environments, and even city boosterism and tourism. Along with those who sought to capitalise on the popularity of sport there were also the

improvers and reformers who argued in favour of the creation of parks, to provide 'breathing and recreational space', who saw sport as a solution to the problem of urban pathology and who established institutions such as the YMCA and the YWCA.

It would be relatively easy to find fault with this book. *City Games* is dense and even encyclopaedic at times since it encapsulates so much recent research and pursues so many lines of enquiry. Riess has clearly concentrated more on bigger and better-researched cities, notably New York, Boston and Chicago at the expense of medium-sized cities, western and southern cities. The last chapter on urban sport from 1945-80 could have been another volume on its own.

Yet it would be churlish to quibble at what is an outstanding contribution. *City Games* introduces a vast panorama of important issues about the complex and changing character of sport in urban societies. It is a creative agenda book that scholars can pour over with profit to discover areas for much future comparative research. It is also a valuable book for students of sports history: it demonstrates what a rich vein Riess has tapped in *City Games*.

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