

Reet A and Maxwell L Howell, *The Genesis of Sport in Queensland: From the Dreamtime to Federation*. University of Queensland Press. St Lucia, 1992. Bibliog., index, tables, pp. 313.

This book is the second of a trilogy on the history of Queensland sport. The first volume, *The Sporting Image: A Pictorial History of Queenslanders at Play* appeared in 1989 and a future volume will deal with sport in the twentieth century. No one can quibble with the claim of the authors that the trilogy, when completed will 'represent the most comprehensive history of sport in any state in Australia' (p. ix). Apart from the work by John Daly on South Australia and the histories of thoroughbred horseracing by Andrew Lemon, which proceed state-by-state, few researchers have yet explored the history of Australian sport from the perspective of an individual state.

At the outset the Howells hoist their colours to the mast taking issue with sports sociologists whom they suggest emphasise the negative aspects of sport and 'tend to pick the bones of sport, glorying in finding salmonella in the process' (p. 4). By comparison, their study of the origin, diffusion and growth of sport in Queensland from before settlement to 1901 'comes out unequivocally on the positive side' (p. 4). The authors suggest that their theoretical approach is eclectic, drawing on evolutionism, functionalism, structural-functionalism and cultural materialism.

Scholars, including those who will not endorse this approach, will find much of value in this book. There is a mine of information, gleaned from various primary sources such as newspapers, about the rise and diffusion of various sports and sporting institutions within Queensland. The material is set out clearly and is enhanced by the use of diagrams. Extensive reference notes will also be of value for those who wish to pursue a variety of research topics.

One of the more valuable aspects of this book is that the Howells focus not only on sport in the capital city of Brisbane but also explore the character of sport in many regional towns, such as Rockhampton and Mackay; in frontier communities, such as the mining town of Charters Towers; and on outback stations. In the process they explore both the sport of the rich and powerful but also sport involving the less influential and even marginal people: shearers, station hands, drovers, Aborigines, Kanakas. Sport in isolated frontier communities, with its polyglot population, was far less organised, rougher and more masculine than the more refined sport of metropolitan centres. Many events were fuelled by alcohol. There was something of a race riot, related to liquor consumption between 'whites and Islanders' (Kanakas) at the Boxing Day race meeting at Mackay in 1883. This incident had wider ramifications: it gained much publicity, fanned racial antagonisms and led to legislation forbidding the recruitment of Pacific Islanders to Queensland.

There is some ambiguity in the treatment of Aborigines and sport. The title of this book and Chapter 1, 'Games in Queensland: From Dreamtime to Early Settlement', seems to imply that there was some continuity between pre-contact games and imported sport. But the Howells admit from the outset that this was probably not the case: they note that Aboriginal 'activities [pre-contact games] were, in the main, not perpetuated, but rather were rapidly submerged and obliterated, following the imposition of a new and dominant culture' (p. 1). There is a need, in my opinion, for further discussion about whether (and how) pre-contact indigenous games should be included in a history of Australian sport. There is also the problem as to how much one can generalise about Aboriginal pre-contact 'sporting' culture as a whole or whether 'sport' varied considerably from one region and one band to another. The Howells are on surer ground when they deal with Aboriginal involvement in imported organised sport. From the 1840s Aborigines were rather more actively involved in all manner of sport-athletics, horseracing and rowing - than they were later in the century.

Rural sports, which are discussed in some detail, represent another interesting area for further research. While some of these sports, such as sheep dog trials, campdrafting, and woodchopping are clearly Australian in origin, it is not clear how much others sports, such as buck jumping, bronco riding and rodeo, drew rather more inspiration from America. and when, how, and why such traditions emerged in Australia.

The most important contribution of this book is that it establishes that there were important regional and state variations in the pattern of Australian sport. The Howells list a number of distinctive features of Queensland sport. Because urbanisation lagged in Brisbane sport was far more decentralised in Queensland with regional cities, such as Rockhampton, being influential. Queensland also had a significant north-south divide: there was at one stage a power struggle between Northern and Southern Amateur Athletic Associations in the 1890s. Problems of transport and the relative isolation of many Queensland communities have also shaped the character of particular sports. Then there are idiosyncratic developments in the history of individual sports such as the prominence of Australian football in the 1870s before rugby became the dominant code in the 1880s. However, more research needs to be undertaken to explain precisely why the Victorian code was so strong in Queensland in the 1870s.

The Genesis of Sport in Queensland has demonstrated that the history of sport in a particular state is a rich area to mine. Hopefully this trilogy will inspire other researchers to explore the history of sport in individual cities, regions and states.

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