

Janice A Beran, *From Six-On-Six to Full Court Press: A Century of Iowa Girls' Basketball*. **Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1993. Illus. pp. xvi + 227.**

This nicely produced volume with many excellent photographs chronicles the history of women's basketball in Iowa over the past century. School girls were given more opportunities and encouragement to play in Iowa than other places in the United States. In fact, Iowa is the only place where school girls have played basketball consistently over the past century. In many cases, the high school girls' games are more important to spectators than the boys' games. This is certainly not true for many other areas of the United States. Readers in Australia and New Zealand will be interested in the six player version of the game played there until 1994 which in many respects resembled the rules of netball with the court divided into three zones and players being limited to certain areas of the court. Both games originally developed out of late-Victorian concerns over the amount of exertion females should undertake when playing sport. Despite this, no one would deny the tremendous speed, stamina and skill needed to play netball or basketball in any of its forms. Perhaps Iowa would be a fruitful place for international netball to look at in any future North American expansion plans with many recent six-a-side players potentially available.

While there is a nostalgic tone to the volume, it recounts numerous experiences of women in sport, too often ignored by sports historians. As a native of Iowa, Beran brings years of insight to the topic and writes with great sensitivity. Readers, however, will have to look elsewhere for in depth analysis and for the development of theoretical explanation. Despite the overall lack of theorising, Beran addresses the question of why basketball was so successful for girls in Iowa. She conducted hundreds of interviews with former and present players and coaches and reviewed the available literature before positing ten reasons for basketball's success. As with netball in New Zealand and Australia, male advocacy was important in the early stages helping the game to consolidate in the

1920s. Ironically, it was the absence of strong university female physical educators which helped the growth of basketball. Unlike nearby states, there were not calls from the universities to stop female competitive sport. Even then, national influences led to cancellation of basketball in Des Moines, the capital, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Beran also claims that the German background of many Iowans and rural traditions aided in the promotion of female physical activity. Even when school budgets did not support girls' basketball in the 1920s, people in the community stepped in to promote the game.

The most important event is the State Tournament begun in 1920 and held in March each year in Des Moines. The girls' state tournament outdraws the boys in crowd support and enthusiasm. The tournament is full of all the pageantry associated with big American sporting events, including cheerleaders and a patriotic ceremony before the final game. While the reader could get caught up in the American patriotism presented in the text, Beran does capture the atmosphere of the tournament even if critique gets lost in the process.

This book is a valuable source for those interested in the history of women's sport and those wanting to learn more about the various forms of basketball played throughout different areas of the world over the past century. Many questions are left unanswered in Beran's account, but the flavour and feel of what players, coaches and fans have experienced comes shining through. Hopefully, further historical, sociological and comparative research will go further in the analysis of such a significant area of female participation in sports. The book will be useful for students wanting to undertake comparative analysis of the development of women's sports in various places and at different points in time.

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