

gender and her often explicit racist attitudes, in a way which could substantiate her earlier equation of Babe Didrikson with Mohammad Ali.

In some ways the comparison between Babe and Ali is justified. They were show people, talented tricksters who created self-defining myths. Yet where Ali used his position to challenge constructions of race, Didrikson was, in Cayleff's own words inarticulate:

... about sports, gender, or sex discrimination. Nor was she a conscious role model for other women athletes. She acted in keeping with the behaviour and values of most exceptional women from the 1930s through the 1950s (p. 249).

By placing sport at the centre of an examination of gender roles, Cayleff sought to demonstrate how Babe and other female athletes provided 'a cultural arena for negotiating changes in sexuality and gender'. Yet Babe was not a negotiator. She accepted prevailing norms, indeed implicitly entrenched them through her own myth making.

By comparing Babe to Ali, an athlete who was 'negotiating changes' in a different cultural context, Cayleff highlighted the ambiguity of Babe Didrikson's legacy to a degree which is not adequately addressed in the pages of this book. I do not wish to criticise Babe Didrikson for what she wasn't. On the contrary — flawed people make the most interesting biographical subjects. Rather, I wish to question the suitability of a comparison, which I feel, owes more to authorial hyperbole than serious analysis.

It is as readers that we must attempt to understand not only the lasting consequences of Babe Didrikson Zaharias's feats and silences, but what we expect from those who emerge as sporting heroes in our times.

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Graham McNeice and Ian Collis, *That's Rugby League: New Light on Football's Greatest Controversies*. Sydney, 1996.

That's Rugby League is a companion piece to the video of the same name produced by Graham McNeice and is a useful addition to the still relatively underdeveloped literature on the code. The author's approach is to focus on some of the game's most famous incidents and events, and each is addressed in separate section. A feature of the book is that all the photographs are taken from film material used in the video, with new

technology being used to transfer the images from film to print. The authors do tend to overuse this technology, which has resulted in a number of blurry and grainy pictures appearing that add nothing to the text, and in some cases it would have been preferable to use traditional still photographs. When successfully applied, however, this new process can produce excellent results. To be able to see exactly what happened to Ellery Hanley in the 1988 Grand Final, or to witness John Bucknell's attack on John Sattler in the 1970 premierships adds new understanding to the events, and fans will be delighted with these new perspectives on on-field action.

Unfortunately, in addressing the off-field dynamics of the sport *That's Rugby League* is largely unsuccessful. In some cases, such as its treatment of the split from rugby union in 1907, the material fails to live up to its ground-breaking billing and merely repeats already established arguments. Of greater concern are a number of cases in which the authors draw conclusions from a solitary piece of evidence, often ignoring the claims of conflicting and more reliable accounts. To assert that South Sydney most likely reneged on an agreement with Balmain not to play in the controversial 1909 Grand Final, based solely on one recycled interview with former Balmain player 'Chook' Fraser, is dubious, especially given the existence of a great deal of primary evidence which backs South's claim that they entered no such agreement. A further flaw is the failure to link events within the game to their wider social environment. The book's treatment of both the 1928 Earl Park riot and of North Sydney's failure to win a premiership since 1922 is indicative of this. The authors ignore or disregard well-established work by historians which place these events within their wider social context in favour of a limited analysis that fails to look beyond what happened on the field of play.

In spite of these flaws, the book remains of value to historians. It shows the value of film, presently largely neglected, as a resource for sports historians, and reveals a number of innovative ways in which it can be used to great benefit. The strength of the book, though, is its extensive use of oral sources. McNeice interviewed 110 players and officials for the video, a sum that cannot fail to impress. The fruits of this mammoth labour serve as a valuable stimulus for further research. The interviews reveal a number of largely ignored themes that deserve further treatment from the game's historians, including the reach of gambling, the role of religion and sectarianism, and especially the culture of violence