

**Richard Holt, J A Mangan (and Pierre Lanfranchi) eds, *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport*. Frank Cass, London, 1996. Index. pp. 184.**

This collection of articles on some European sports heroes first appeared in a special edition of the *International Journal of the History of Sport* (vol. 13, no. 1) and for those who do not subscribe to that excellent journal this book will be a welcome addition to their library.

One of the great services of the journal that Tony Mangan has done so much to promote, and the books that he has edited in special editions from articles contributed to it, is to introduce non-English writers to a monolingual English-speaking audience.

And indeed it is the contributions of the non-English writers and their continental heroes that make this collection so worthwhile. This is not to deny the worth of the articles by Dick Holt and Tony Mason, neither of whom can say anything that is not worthwhile, but most of us have some familiarity with their work. Here Mason discusses two Edwardian footballers, Stephen Bloomer and the lesser known Harold Fleming,

while Holt discourses more widely on the topic he introduced at the ASSH conference in Launceston in 1993: there he discussed Jack Hobbs, here he discusses a whole range of English cricketing heroes. Both Holt and Mason, too, have contributed elsewhere to sporting heroes, a superb study of Stanley Matthews by Mason in Holt's collection, *Sport and the Working Class in Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1990) and in insight that only a 'foreigner' who had lived in Scotland could have given in Holt's analysis of Denis Law's position in the mythology of Scottish sport, in Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker, eds, *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation: Ninety-Minute Patriots?* (Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1994).

Jean Borotra (the 'Bounding Basque') and Max Schmeling will be well known to general sports historians, and Friedrich Ludwig Turnwater' Jahn is something of an icon among historians of physical education. Here can be found a neat summary of their work. Jean-Michel Faure gives a sociological-cum-literary introduction to the French star who became a hero when the other 'Musqueteers' of the 1920s, René Lacoste and Henri Cochet, became forgotten stars (although in the case of Lacoste fame came with the designer clothes that carry his name, complete with the crocodile logo in honour of the alligator that he brought back with him from one of his many trips to the United States). Much of Borotra's status as a star came from the style that gave him his nickname, but it was his role with the Petain regime during World War II that made him a hero, first as a top minister in the collaborationist regime, later as a critic. Strangely in a discussion of Borotra as a French hero, Faure virtually passes over his being a member of one of the most ferociously nationalist communities anywhere: the Basques.

Schmeling also owed much of his fame to the era in which he lived, unwittingly in his case as the unwilling agent of Nazi racism when his confrontations with Joe Louis were billed as the Aryan Nazi against the black sub-human. Siegfried Gerhmann, better known to most of us as the historian of Germany's Schalke 04 football team, sets the record straight on Schmeling. In a poll to find the German 'Sports Personality of the Century', Schmeling came fifth, behind such stars as Franz Beckenbauer and Boris Becker, still fresh in the sporting memory, while the heyday of the great boxer went back fifty years. This short study by Gerhmann will explain why.

Much of what Christiane Eisenberg has to say on Jahn is well known,

but this concise account is an excellent and insightful introduction. It deals only with his life and says little on the ramification of his teachings in the twentieth century, when the Turner movement split, some to take a purely German nationalist line, others that of the Nazis. It would have been interesting if Eisenberg had discussed which was the more logical.

Of the other heroes treated here, Matthias Sindelar and Stanislas Kopa are well-known to football historians, Joseph Uridil of the 1920s slightly less so, and Rachid Mekloufi of the Algerian National Front XI of the late 1950s only to the specialists. This is a wonderful introduction to the two Austrian and the two 'immigrant' French stars: the work of Roman Horak and Wolfgang Maderthaler on Austrian football is superb, and it is heartening that their work is now appearing in English. Pierre Lanfranchi is well known to us in Australia, Alfred Wahl less so, although he is the most distinguished of French football historians. It is to be hoped that more of his work will be made available to an English audience. France is also represented by Andre Rauch in a first-class analysis of the Carpentier-Demsey fight of 1921. Rauch builds around an event that lasted less than ten minutes a fascinating picture of the sports world in the years just after the end of World War I.

Italy is represented by Stefano Pivato, in an extract from his much larger work on the Italian cycling champion, Gino Bartali. Here is the tale of the golden boy of the Catholic Church, whose sporting triumphs in the sport that was second only to football in Italian sporting mythology, helped it regain some honour in its otherwise sordid relations with the Fascists. He reappeared after the war as a Catholic hero in the Church's more enthusiastic fight against Communism. To maintain the manichean division, the young and the rapidly rising star of the road, Fausto Coppa was depicted, against his wishes, as an agent of the red devils. Fascinating material.

Disappointing, on the other hand, is the rather turgid account of 'The British Middle-Class Hero', by Tony Mangan. Why Britain and not England, a distinction Dick Holt is always careful to make (Mangan prefers not to think about the Scots or the other parts of the United Kingdom), is a mystery, as is the decision to give page after page of Henry Newbolt's indigestible poetry — one would have thought Mangan has already provided us with enough examples of this.

This is a book about European sports heroes, but it is, as is inevitable in such collected works, uneven. Three English, three French, two German

and one Austrian chapter leaves an awful lot of Europe untapped, especially the Scandinavian countries and those of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, while the Latin countries have to make do with a solitary contribution. On the other hand, the translations, often a problem in such works, are generally excellent.

All in all then, a splendid but not wholly satisfying feast. Perhaps the greatest disappointment is in the entree and the sweets, an introduction and 'epilogue' that offered the chance to discuss in more detail the nature of 'heroism' and how it differs from mere stardom. Here the editors might have used examples from a wider sample than is given here, rather than limply listing what the various contributors have to say, name-dropping rather than discussing ideas and concluding with some rather empty comments about the nature of 'Europeanisation' — although here my own bias comes into play: I hold in horror much of what 'Europe' and the 'European Commission' are doing to sport. Both editors (Lanfranchi is in the strange situation of being reduced to something of an afterthought in the credits) have put their names to the introduction and conclusion, but one suspects that the hand of the more senior editor prevailed.

The notion of a 'European' sports hero raised in the Epilogue is as pointless as all attempts to create a spurious European identity. There is such a thing as Europe, and there is no reason why it cannot be used as the parameters for a discussion: problems come only when you try to suggest that there is such a thing as a 'European', more so a 'European hero'. Books on African, Asian and (Latin-) American sports heroes would be welcomed, and they might find a common thread in their anti-Europeanism, but on the whole their status as heroes would come in their own right, battling against poverty and injustice, opposing the ruling elites as in colonial cultures and racist regimes — in general those stars whose fame on the sports field can be used to strike a blow for justice and common decency. The again this raised only one aspect of the sports hero: social justice was low on the priorities of the two most famous national heroes of all time, Babe Ruth and Don Bradman. May the debate continue.

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