

Toby Miller, Geoffrey Lawrence, Jim McKay and David Rowe,
Globalization and Sport: Playing the World, London, Sage, 2001, vii + 160
pp, ISBN 0-7619-5968-8 and 0-7619-5969-6 (pb).

On finishing *Globalization and Sport*, I turned on the radio. Australian Rules football fans in Victoria were lamenting an upcoming Grand Final in which perhaps no local team would be playing. Several said they had no interest in the remainder of the season, no intention of attending the Grand Final and no sense of loyalty to football administrators who had extended the code beyond its original territory but, in doing so, had ripped the essence and the spirit of the

game from those who had been its lifeblood. Australian Rules is certainly not a global sport but it has been corporatised and many of the points made by Miller, Lawrence, McKay and Rowe in this book could not have been illustrated more aptly than by these fans' grievances.

The authors are interested not only in the globalization of sport but also in its governmentalization, Americanization, televisualization and commodification, which they see going hand in hand with the globalization process. So common are these factors and so often do they work in concert that they are labelled GGATaC. The end result of these combined forces is a "sports product" in which can be identified many of the features in other commodified products in capitalist society. The sports product may be the Olympics, soccer, one of the competing football codes in Australia, or ice hockey in Canada, as these all share similarities following their transformation brought about largely by these processes.

While the authors insist that globalization is not always a homogenizing force, they point to sufficient multiple commonalities and economic tendencies to make this a subject of great cultural importance. The commonalities and economic tendencies are drawn out over four sections which deal respectively with: theories of globalization as it affects sport; analytical approaches to the body as trained and commodified; television's contribution to the transformation of sport, against a backdrop of huge change in its own field; and problematics of governance, which prompt questions about who rules and who benefits.

A particularly dominant theme throughout the book, and deservedly so, is the contradiction between globalization and national identity and the use the former makes of the latter. It is almost as if nationalist sentiment and the euphoria it can arouse serve as a mask behind which the full impact of the processes can take place, though of course it is more complex than that. Paradoxically, the somewhat symbiotic relationship between sporting success and the peaking of national identity occurs precisely as other factors intrude which one would think might render the feelings of sporting nationalism weaker, if not obsolete. As is pointed out, for instance (p. 32), an athlete may be born and raised in one country, be a citizen of another (sometimes for "tax haven" benefits), train in another under the guidance of a coach who is of yet another nationality, and be sponsored by multinational firms whose products are universally sold and whose image is recognised globally.

Yet the very processes under discussion appear to come together to endorse the sporting star as being "of that nation" which lays credit to having given him or her just those peculiar characteristics which have resulted in his/her success. We see the flags waving behind the sportster's efforts, the applause from an audience whose faces might be painted in the colours of the flag, while television commentary consistently draws on the sporting hero's nationality as a primary

factor and advertisements from corporate sponsors integrate nationalism and sport into their messages, inextricably linking the symbols of all three. National identity, it seems, can be put on as quickly and easily as a flag can be draped around one's shoulders for a victory lap.

Indeed, I find it remarkable how rapidly manly Australians embraced medal-winning pole vaulter Tatiana Grigorieva as Australian through-and-through while having trouble seeing asylum seekers as even human. No doubt it was easier in Grigorieva's case because her tall, slim, athletic body, blond hair and attractive European features lent themselves to the sorts of representation with which most European nations would clamour to be connected with. Not insignificantly, she was marketable in ways extending beyond nationality. Her modelling as a side line to pole vaulting helped her media exposure, with such exposure boosting sponsorship prospects, and so the cycle goes on.

Miller and co-authors also provide numerous insights into what they call the New International Division of Labour (NICL), demonstrating precisely how sport is implicated in this and how the NICL governs GGATaC. There is no denying that there are some acronyms that must be dealt with to appreciate this book, and similarly some conceptual material to be considered, but the useful theories, fascinating examples, and the insights provided into the processes under discussion and the enormous impact they are having on sport are well worth the effort.

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