

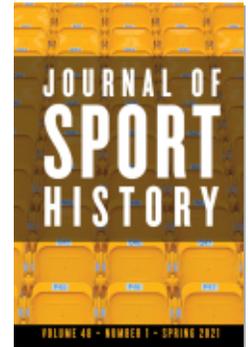


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Sports in Africa: Past and Present ed. by Todd Cleveland et al. (review)

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codes that attract large-scale, tax-exempt private donations in ways that actually hurt the institutions and their home states. While the statistics that drive this argument are well known publicly, Bennett's impressive ability to scrutinize them as public-policy problems provides new insight.

The third chapter in the heart of Bennett's book may be the most compelling; it is also the longest and most sweeping. The author argues that college athletics does not provide the institution with the "boost" (130) that conventional wisdom says it does. Bennett cross-examines the arguments that successful sports teams increase the admissions of their institutions, improve the public perception of the schools, and provide an economic bump to the local areas. He does this, as is his *modus operandi* throughout the text, with humor, anecdotes, and sophisticated and polished rhetoric, even if the absence of evidence for certain claims may bother a historian at times.

Following the heart of the book, Bennett offers a short chapter, "A Game for Every Girl and a Girl for Every Game." After most of the manuscript being a discussion on the public-policy perils of college sport, this chapter on "how women's sports lost their virtue and became carbon copies of the male game" (180) appears misplaced or ill-fitting. This chapter is less about women's sport and more about introducing a different way. Bennett laments the loss of the traditional, pre-NCAA women's sport model as the first of his suggestions for reform or remedy.

The final chapter offers the rest of the author's suggestions to reform or renew college sport. Some of these would fundamentally alter university athletic departments; others would simply change football into an activity that an institution could actually control. These suggestions are polished, just like the writing of this book. They show the author's comfort with the topic and expertise. Just like the detailed public-policy chapters, these suggestions help *Intercollegiate Athletics, Inc.* emerge from within the busy landscape of college sport critiques.

—Chad Carlson
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Cleveland, Todd, Tarminder Kaur, and Gerard Akindes, eds. *Sports in Africa: Past and Present*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020. Pp. xi+299. Footnotes, contributor biographies. \$60.00, hb.

Apart from the introduction to *Sports in Africa*, there are seventeen chapters in what can only be described as an extraordinary volume, in every sense of the word a tour de force. This reviewer longed for the editors—and the Ohio University Press—to have expanded and extended a collection of essays that are as remarkable for their authors' backgrounds and identities as for the research and scholarship that they disseminate. *Sports in Africa* showcases a social anthropologist professor of history; a video-lab assistant; a communication consultant; doctoral students at Georgetown University, Washington DC, and Otago University, New Zealand; a kinesiologist; an emeritus professor of sociology of sports; and a senior lecturer in literature and cultural studies. The editors note that their challenge is

to make the topic of sports in Africa worthy of gathering serious recognition within the academic community. They should be assured that this volume succeeds mightily on all fronts. Not only is the writing empirically driven, but, more importantly, the theoretic content is grounded in prose that is fresh, vibrant, and something not always associated with what is a university textbook, fascinating. Cleveland, Kaur, and Akindes are to be congratulated for putting together a team that explores complex identities and the dynamic nature of African sport.

In the book's section on "African Sports Pedagogy," Todd Cleveland, Matt Carotenuto, and Peter Alegi describe how they share the politics and practices of sports in Africa with American students. They tap into mega-sporting events such as the 2010 World Cup (soccer) in South Africa, the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and the Rumble in the Jungle (1974) between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali in Zaire (Congo). Film is seen to be a most productive platform to gain a deeper understanding of social and cultural identities. Clint Eastwood's *Invictus* (2009) and the documentary *When We Were Kings* (dir. Leon Gast, 1996) are listed as valuable teaching tools. Cleveland comments that his students "are not only learning from a film's content but are also assessing its evidentiary value by determining both what it reveals and what it conceals" (42).

Part 3 of *Sports in Africa* has a chapter that examines the struggle of women footballers against marginalization in Nigeria. The focus of the essay is resistance in Nigerian female football. Part 4 gives a chilling yet heartwarming insight into racial segregation within the Transkei during the time of the South African apartheid. The activity, surfing "the local beach[,] . . . served people of different races and classes as a meeting point where they could encounter each other in a respectable manner, far removed from the more racially hostile urban settings and social control of the South African state" (122).

The fifth part exemplifies what makes *Sports in Africa* such a compelling read. The narrative feels fresh, with new perspectives. The editors call this material the edge of the sports periphery. One author studies the place of pay-to-watch football kiosks in Kenya. Another writer sets his landscape in the Western Cape and considers the role of unofficial gambling games. Part 6 follows African footballers' migration to Europe. The section is subtitled "European Dreams and Nightmares." Writers Christian Ungruhe and Sine Agergard open their chapter by underscoring the intriguing transition of life as a Premier League player. Cameroonian international Benoît Assou-Ekotto envisaged his post-career role was to be an adult movie actor!

Black physical culture and weightlifting are the grist of Chapter 13 and, in the following chapter, Kenyan running comes under the microscope but not in the traditional vein of men and women as distance runners. On this occasion, the central figure is Seraphino Antao. In 1963, his sprinting success against elite European runners made his prime minister Jomo Kenyatta send him a telegram: "You have really become Kenya's priceless jewel in sports and shining athletic star" (226).

In Part 8, the two chapters on rugby are so well argued that they merit a dust cover all their own. When I visited the Capetown Springbok Hall of Fame, I was forced to observe that its view of apartheid was seen as an unfortunate occurrence rather than the plunge into an appalling societal abyss. Derek Charles Catsam in his chapter "Rugby Transformation—as Alibi" describes the Springboks winning the 2019 Rugby World Cup led by

black captain Siya Kolisi. Catsam's concluding words are potent: "[It] hardly absolves the country's rugby authorities of past sins, nor does it make them immune to future ones" (246).

Sports in Africa is a joy to hold. Hats off to the Ohio University Press for not only supporting the venture but publishing a book that looks like, and reads like, a classic.

—Scott A.G.M. Crawford
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Davies, Wade. *Native Hoops: The Rise of American Indian Basketball, 1895–1970*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020. Pp. v+279. Notes, bibliography, index, and illustrations. \$50.00, hb. \$24.95, pb.

Historian Wade Davies's recent book on the history of American Indian basketball is an illuminating social history that will help historians to reimagine the complicated origins of modern sports through Indigenous perspectives. The power of *Native Hoops* lies in its decidedly Indigenous point of view, paralleling Daniel Richter's Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Facing East from Indian Country* by reframing the history of basketball through the ideas, perspective, and experiences of American Indian peoples. Empirically rich and historically comprehensive, the book covers seventy-five years of American Indian basketball from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1970s. Yet Davies's postcolonial contextualization of the "invention" of basketball in 1891 and his approach to American Indian sports history "as a story of hope, achievement, and celebration" (6) constitute arguably the book's most important contributions.

First, *Native Hoops* effectively indigenizes the historical origins of basketball, providing a much-needed contextualization of the game's modern beginnings from the standpoint of the North American Indigenous experience. To date, most histories of basketball, despite a diversity of theoretical and authorial perspectives, generally accept the Western-centric contention that YMCA instructor James Naismith "invented" the sport at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891. Davies, however, conceptualizes 1891 as a moment of contestation, starting with Native author Sherman Alexie's polemical assertion that "indigenous peoples of the Americas had at least played a *form* of [basketball] centuries ago" (8). He acknowledges that Naismith undoubtedly wrote down rules that became seminal to modern basketball but explains that Naismith's version probably appeared "as something both familiar and novel" to the Native students at government boarding schools (where Native youth first encountered Naismith's game) because "all the major team sports" at the schools "structurally paralleled indigenous sports to a high degree" (12) and Naismith himself was inspired specifically by the Indigenous sport of lacrosse. By studying the history of basketball in relation to Indigenous athletic traditions and Anglo-American imperial efforts at the turn of the twentieth century, Davies offers not only a blueprint for rethinking Western-centered narratives on "invented" modern sports but an example of how to rethink the notion of modern sporting "inventors" from within a rigorously historical and empirical framework.