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Media Sports Stars: Masculinities and Moralities (Book Review)

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(Theory and Understanding) introduce the reader to a wide range of existing research, examining the broader social, historical and political contexts within which sport is embedded while outlining the struggles involved in bringing the issue of sexual abuse to the wider public. Parts three (Policy and Prevention) and four (Conclusions and Challenges) are intended for those with a day-to-day involvement and interest in the ethical practice of sport. Overall, the most compelling aspect of the book is the extensive use of interview excerpts from survivors of sexual exploitation. These narratives provide compelling examples of the practices of sport that place young athletes—particularly girls—at risk of abuse.

Brackenridge contends that her book has “an unashamedly political agenda, which is to bring about change in the way sport is structured and managed” (p. 5). She argues that “by changing the power relations between athletes and authority figures, and between men, women and children in sport, we can prevent sexual exploitation” (p. 231). Brackenridge acknowledges that there is still much empirical research needed, including an analysis of the ways in which gender, social class, sexuality, disability, race and ethnicity make an impact upon people’s experiences of exploitation. Unfortunately, interspersed throughout the book is an ill-informed critique of postmodern research approaches, which Brackenridge sees as being of limited use for advocacy research. Her assumptions regarding postmodern research approaches limit an understanding of the ways in which feminist action research, such as the work by Patti Lather, has moved beyond monolithic models to engage with material, political practices. Rather than advocate theoretical coherence to tackle sexual exploitation in sport, perhaps a postmodern turn would help to address the gaps that remain in research priorities that ignore power relations of race, class, sexuality and gender. Although not technically a book about sport history, *Spoilsports* is a critical introduction to sexual exploitation in sport that has much to offer sport historians.

—CATHY VAN INGEN
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WHANNEL, GARRY. *Media Sports Stars: Masculinities and Moralities*. London: Routledge, 2002. Pp x+216. Appendices, notes, bibliography and index.

As you read through *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities* one thing becomes abundantly clear: *We’re not in Kansas anymore*. Garry Whannel’s book explores the relationship between sport, media and culture primarily through an examination of the athletic “role models” of professional sports in the United Kingdom. Although occasionally veering into the sports world of North America, this work concentrates on British sport, and frankly, this is the strength of the book.

Whannel organizes his book into three parts. In the first part, “The Tales they tell of men,” Whannel introduces and examines five themes: “the supposed ‘crisis’ of masculinity; the development of media sport, stardom and the heroic; narrativity; and the culture of sport” (p. 15). In this section he quickly defines sporting culture as an almost exclusively masculine enclave and tries to establish a solid theoretical foundation for the remainder of the book. Whannel describes how the world of sport is supported by the continual production of narrativized sporting histories that are endlessly recycled by popular media forms. Knowledge of these sporting narratives, he argues, produces “an exclusive form of cultural capital, which is part of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 15). Whannel reminds his readers that masculinity is never a singular item but rather that there are always contesting ideas of masculinity always shifting in relation to specific historical moments.

The second part, “From Sporting Print to Satellite,” analyzes the “process of sport star construction in its historical context” (p. 79). Whannel begins with brief case studies of early twentieth century athletes, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Fred Perry and Babe Ruth, to consider how issues of race and domesticity impact the fashioning of masculine ideals. Next Whannel focuses on issues of class and nostalgia as he delves into the post-World War II masculinity represented by Joe DiMaggio, Roger Bannister, and Stanley Matthews. This is followed by “Pretty boys, the 1960s, and Pop Culture,” (p. 109) a study of the flamboyant sports stars, Muhammad Ali and George Best, and how their anti-establishment postures complicated their “heroic” athletic exploits. Whannel concludes this section by directing his attention towards Ian Botham and “the rise of competitive individualism and the work ethic [that] paralleled the rise of Thatcher, Reagan and monetarism” (p. 131).

In the third and final part, “The Restless Vortex of Celebrity,” Whannel examines contemporary British sports stars, Paul Gascoigne, David Beckham, Linford Christie and Ian Wright. In his exploration of the current sporting moment, he describes a “new” narrative pattern of sport celebrity that follows the rise, fall, and therapeutic redemption of the male athlete. This new sports celebrity is significant because, as he convincingly argues in this book, the “images of sport stars function . . . as means by which temperatures and pressures of social relations and practices can be gauged” (p. 215).

Garry Whannel, however, is not taking the temperature of the *world* of sports but rather the body of Great Britain. It seems strange, for example, that nowhere in Whannel's book is there any mention of hip hop culture or the rise of women in sports; two items that are a major part of the contemporary American sports world. But in a country with a much smaller black population and without Title IX, these omissions are understandable and illuminating. In addition, Whannel's discussion of the relationship between "Lad" culture and the rise of men's magazines (like *Loaded* and *Maxim*) and sporting masculinity seems both specific to Great Britain and applicable to recent changes in male body image in the United States.

For analogous reasons, however, the sections in the book that do focus on non-British sports figures (such as Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio) are the weakest parts of the book. His brief discussion of Tiger Woods as the "new black sporting hero" (p. 177), for example, includes references to Michael Jordan, Arthur Ashe, and Magic Johnson that do not reflect the fact that the sports involved, tennis, golf, and basketball, resonate extremely differently and dissonantly in American culture. This consideration for the dissimilar cultural characteristics of various sports is lacking in the British-centered parts of the book, as well. The masculinity constructed around cricket may be far different from that of English football, but this aspect is left unexplored.

Despite these occasional missteps, *Media Sports Stars* is a well-thought out examination of sporting masculinity, but its real power is that it prompts readers, particularly North American readers, to consider that sporting culture relates not only to historic specificities, but geographic and national specificities as well. It is a reminder that representations of masculinity are always in competition and that culture is never singular.

—ANDREW C. MILLER
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DINE, PHILIP. *French Rugby Football: A Cultural History*. Berg, U.K.: Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2001. Pp. 229. No illustrations, no bibliography. \$19.50.

It was the early 1980s and I had just finished filming a piece with Jean-Pierre Rives to preview the Five Nations Championship for ITV. He politely declined dinner but agreed to join us later at Chez Castell, the famous old Paris nightclub in St. Germain that the Parisian rugby set used as a clubhouse. There, he apologised for being late but explained he had been summoned to dine with President Mitterand. Who else was there? "Nobody, it was private," he replied with a slightly embarrassed smile.

It was confirmation that Rives had become a superstar whose circle of admirers reached far beyond the normal rugby circles but it was also further evidence of something I had been aware of ever since I first played against France in 1967. Rugby has enormous clout on the other side of the channel. When we (Wales) won the Grand Slam in Paris in 1971 President Pompidou made the speech at the banquet, high-ranking ministers abound at rugby occasions and a number of prominent rugby men were elected as mayors in last year's local elections.

Although its heartland is confined to an area in the southwest which covers no more than one third of the country it rivals soccer as the national sport and the great, the good and the glamorous all want a part of it. A bit like Wales but with a rather more powerful cast!

Now, thanks to Philip Dine's fascinating study of the cultural history of French rugby, the bigger picture comes into focus. The author is an unashamed Francophile from Devon who also has a passion for rugby. Having learned French at his grandfather's knee, he appears to have read every book in the language that relates to rugby and has lovingly distilled the cultural essence from them to put his thesis together.

Rugby was introduced to France at the end of the nineteenth century by British expats and was soon taken up by the universities and Anglophiles in Paris, but it was the ways it became a popular rather than elite sport and that it flourished in the cities, towns and especially villages of the rural southwest rather than the industrial cities of the north and east, as did most sports imports, that forms one of the main strands of this book.

Because the game is characterised by a ban on passing the ball forward and being in front of the ball when it is played there is a front-line which is peculiar to rugby. Sebastien Darbon expands upon this notion of territory to be defended, which is heightened by the violence that results from the physical contact of the sport. It struck a special chord with the French, especially in "The Midi," where ancient rivalries, going back to the Cathars and the Huguenots and involving the Basques and the Catalans in the far southwest, were still festering not far from the surface.

The story of how Rugby Union was adopted by the collaborationist Vichy regime in the Second World War (in 1941 Marshall Petain personally signed the decree to close down Rugby League which was becoming worryingly popular) yet survived the post-war purge of everything associated with Vichy to become a vital symbol of President de Gaulle's