

consistently projects a formula of what it is to be a “real man,” creating pedagogy of dominant masculinity. “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula,” written with Michele Dunbar and Darnell Hunt, teaches boys and men to accept, even glorify, “a set of bodily and relational practices that resist and oppose a view of women as fully human and place boys’ and men’s long-term health and prospects in jeopardy” (p. 156). Importantly, the instruction in masculinity is not limited to observation of elite athletics but is mediated by television network choices on how to cover sports journalistically and by the advertisements that accompany these broadcasts. Messner sees in this convergence a “master discourse produced at the nexus of the institutions of sport, mass media, and corporations” that produce and sell products—and ideologies—to boys and men (p. 152).

While no single argument can be culled from a set of collected essays, several major themes run through this illuminating book. Messner makes a convincing case that despite the sea change in women’s sports since the early 1970s, it is quite possible for women to participate in massive numbers without seriously eroding sport’s place as a privileged site of masculine prowess and normative standards of masculinity. “This Revolution Is Not Being Televised,” coauthored with Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Nicole Willms, presents disturbing evidence of this trend. In a longitudinal study of network sports news from 1989 to 2004, Messner found that network news coverage of women’s sports has remained appallingly low, growing from only 4 percent of air time in 1989 to a still paltry 5 percent in 2004 (p. 157).

A second message is that just as individual sporting events have winners and

losers, the world of sport—never disconnected from other powerful institutions and cultural centers—helps create social winners and losers. While women have both won and lost in these high-stake games, men too are differentiated into winners—those who benefit from a privileged athletic brand of masculinity while escaping its long-term damages—and losers, men who either reject dominant masculinities or embrace athletic manhood but end up sacrificing their bodies and long-term career options for temporary status as masculine jock icons.

Finally, despite continuities, the very liveliness of sport as a realm of cultural contestation makes it an arena open to advocacy for positive social change. Messner writes as a committed feminist. His goal in *Out of Play* is to illuminate the gender dynamics in play at any given moment. He asks how they contribute to or challenge inequities between men and women or among different groups of men, always with an eye to developing research studies and activist interventions that will reshape the world of play as one step toward creating a more just society.

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—Susan Cahn, *State University of New York, Buffalo, NY*

### **Sports in Ancient Times**

*Nigel B. Crowther*

Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Timelines, illustrations, further readings, index. 180 pp. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780275987398

Anyone who has read Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* knows the central role of

ancient sport in the study of play, and therefore it is of great usefulness to have a new introduction to this topic for the general reader. Nigel Crowther, Professor of classical studies at the University of Western Ontario, is an accomplished scholar of ancient Greek and Roman sports and spectacles, who has authored numerous scholarly books, articles, and chapters and has increased public awareness of the fascinating field of ancient sports via more popular media too. To this book, which is aimed at the nonspecialist, Crowther not only brings the requisite expertise in historical and cultural studies, but he is also conversant with the various fields that inform this truly multidisciplinary area of study: anthropology, sociology, gender studies, and psychology.

He describes his intent this way:

These chapters encompass such basic and diverse themes as accidents, amateurism, blood sports, bribery, cheating, competition, defeat, diet, entertainment, fair play (or lack of it), fame, ideals, nudity, participation, performance-enhancing drugs, professionalism, records, rewards, riots, spectators, team games, victory, and violence. They also touch on several universal issues that are an integral part of sport in many cultures: the environment, minorities, nationalism, peace, politics, rituals, sex, social classes, tourism, and war (p. xii).

This is a remarkably ambitious program, and, to Crowther's credit, it is not mere hyperbole. This slender volume does treat its entire catalogue of topics in informative and often stimulating ways. The eighteen chapters are organized by geographical area: the Far East, the Middle

East (with special focus on Egypt under the pharaohs), Greece (including Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations), Rome and Italy (including the Etruscans), Byzantium, and Mesoamerica. The volume thus surveys both western and eastern sport from about 3000 BCE through the Middle Ages. Crowther has visited many of the archaeological sites related to this study and is adept at drawing instructive parallels between ancient and modern sport. The timelines Crowther provides (pp. vx–xx) for various ancient civilizations, though necessarily broad, should help readers locate a great expanse of material within a useful temporal framework. Regrettably, there are no maps. Approximately two-thirds of the book is dedicated to ancient Greece and Rome, which is not inappropriate because such a wealth of archaeological, artistic, and documentary evidence survives from these societies.

Crowther's treatment of controversial topics typically is circumspect and cautious, an approach which well serves the work's general audience. Sometimes, however, Crowther errs too far on the side of caution. For example, although his account of the obviously propagandized sports under the Egyptian pharaohs suggests otherwise, Crowther's conclusion seems to lend credence (p. 33) to the idea that these carefully staged contests are legitimate forerunners of the Greeks' more elaborate, democratic and genuinely competitive games. Classicists used to be too hellenocentric, but athletics remains one area of ancient Mediterranean society where the extant evidence indicates that the Greeks did indeed bring something unique to the arena, and there is no need to be apologetic about it.

Overall, Crowther does an excellent job of summarizing scholarly conflicts

within his narrow compass. Typical is his extremely brief discussion (pp. 58–59) of the phenomenon of nudity in Greek athletics. But while I commend the way he covers the current thinking on this provocative subject in so limited a space, curious readers seeking specifics will want more guidance than they receive from his suggested further readings on this topic (pp. 171–72). This is a not infrequent drawback of *Sports in Ancient Times*, and it calls into question the editorial decision not to include endnotes or footnotes in the volume.

Crowther's fair and balanced scholarship is admirable, and he usually avoids the unsupportable and ultimately subjective assertions that often infiltrate books about sports history. In the case of Greek sports, for example, sports scholars often claim that either the *stade*—an ancient footrace one stadium (six hundred Greek feet) long—or the *pankration*—a contest blending boxing and wrestling—was historically the most prestigious Olympic event, which in both cases is disputable. So it is disappointing to see Crowther do something similar when he writes, "The most honorable way to win [in Greek sports] was to win 'without dust' (*akoniti*), when an outstanding athlete did not actually compete in an event, because his opponents withdrew" (p. 53), though I rush to point out this kind of claim is a rare exception in *Sports in Ancient Times*.

The primary shortcoming of this volume is its lack of illustrations, of which there are only 37, all in black and white. So much of the evidence for ancient sports is visual, and much of it should be viewed in color, especially in the case of tomb paintings, Greek black- and red-figure vases, and Roman mosaics. By comparison, Stephen G. Miller's exemplary textbook

*Ancient Greek Athletics* (2004) features 291 beautiful illustrations, most in color, and sells for less than Crowther's volume. Today's students have been largely educated in classrooms that feature a balance of images and text, a development that inevitably has influenced the textbook industry. To many contemporary students, I fear, this volume will appear drab and old-fashioned.

Despite these criticisms, I can strongly recommend this superlatively researched and pellucidly written book, though readers may need to supplement its reading with visual evidence presented on Web sites or in textbooks such as Miller's, or even E. Norman Gardiner's *Athletics of the Ancient World* (1930), which despite its obvious ideological flaws (its Victorian concepts of amateurism and elitism) and anachronisms is richly illustrated with 214 black-and-white images. It is my sincere hope that future editions address this defect to help Crowther's work gain the wide readership it richly deserves.

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—David M. Christenson, *University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ*

### **Playing Outdoors: Spaces and Places, Risk and Challenge**

*Helen Tovey*

Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 2007. Illustrations, bibliographical references, index. 176 pp. \$49.95 paper. ISBN: 9780335216413.

A few months back, I visited the Play Trail at Moors Valley Country Park in Hampshire, England. The trail is a roughly circular woodland walk that takes in some unique and charming artist-designed