

place within it, and online fantasy-based creative-writing spaces. Even a mention of sociological and cultural relevance of D&D in its most recent incarnation (D&D Fifth Edition) would have been welcomed. I hope that other scholars pick up Laycock's threads and explore today's player transformation, world building, and cultural contexts.

In the final analysis, this book deserves a place in the library of any scholar of games as cultural texts—and especially those interested in religion and games. I will refer to the text often as both an effective analysis of the impact RPGs have on culture and as a masterful example of historical research into play and its place in society.

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Playing to Win: Sports, Video Games, and the Culture of Play

Robert Alan Brookey and Thomas P. Oates, eds.

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015. Introduction, contributors, index. 251 pp. \$26.00 paper. ISBN: 9780253015020

In assembling the collection of scholarship that comprises *Playing to Win*, Robert Alan Brookey and Thomas P. Oates make a solid contribution to the growing body of literature analyzing sports video games. Relying on a group of researchers from sports studies and video game studies, the book offers great diversity in its coverage

of why we should take sports video games seriously and offers critical insights into how we can think about them meaningfully. The major drawback of the book is one of timing, because much of the work seems to be written well before the book was published.

Divided into two sections, “Gender Play” and “The Uses of Simulation,” Brookey and Oates set up the volume with an introduction that lays out the importance of sports video games by invoking games from *Pong* (1972) to *Madden NFL* (1988, 1990–present) to demonstrate that sports games are a key part of both a video game history and the contemporary video game market. Chapters range in focus, but most address representations of sports in video games like *Madden*, *FIFA*, and *Pro Evolution Soccer*. However, some contributions reach beyond the text of video games and consider elements like fantasy sports, e-sports, and the advertising surrounding games.

The strength of the collection is its breadth. In taking on a number of different kinds of topics, Brookey and Oates have assembled a collection that encourages the reader to think beyond any singular way of examining sports games. For example, I find the inclusion of an analysis of fantasy sports players in chapter 4 particularly commendable.

Beyond the specific topics discussed, the group of authors also demonstrates a commitment to multiple methodologies because it includes scholars from a number of fields—most notably some who primarily analyze video games and some who primarily analyze sport. The mix of the two groups may sometimes leave one or the other wanting more, but overall the

book appears generally well grounded in both video game studies and sports studies. Brookey and Oates do a particularly good job of setting up the context for the book in their introduction, demonstrating knowledge of both sports and video games and their respective bodies of academic literature.

My greatest reservation about the book has to do with the sometimes sluggish pace of academic publishing. Published in 2015, the book includes statements about how “video game studies have not embraced sports games” (p. 5) and seems largely written at least a couple of years ago. There is no mention of *Sports Videogames*, a collection edited by Mia Consalvo, Konstantin Mitgutsch, and Abe Stein that appeared two years earlier in mid-2013, almost two years before this book. The major point *Playing to Win* makes about sports video games being relatively understudied compared to other types of games, particularly online fantasy-themed games, still holds, but it is severely compromised by an earlier volume absent from this work’s discussion.

The timing problem also reaches into the book’s analyses of particular games and systems, as most chapters focus on the 2012 or 2013 version of a game, which is often two or three versions behind the current market. The highly iterative, annual tradition of most sports games makes them both hard to think about innovatively and hard to write about: many changes have been made in the games since the versions discussed in the book. One game analyzed in *Playing to Win*, *NCAA Football*, is no longer produced, a fact the authors relegated to a chapter postscript. Moreover, I would have liked to see more about the

court case and circumstances surrounding the game’s demise. The Wii chapters make no mention of the WiiU (2013), which could complicate or change some of the author’s contentions. Issues of timing rarely damn a book, but they may lead a reader to question some conclusions and to long for something more timely.

Overall, I found the book’s breadth, diversity, and focus quite interesting, despite my lingering worry about the gap between when the chapters were written and when I read them.

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Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture

Adrienne Shaw

Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Notes, gameography, bibliography, index, images. 317 pp. \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 9780816693160

In *Gaming at the Edge*, Adrienne Shaw offers an incisive critique of the ways in which scholars, activists, and media producers have approached issues of representation and diversity within video games. Shaw’s work is based on a number of in-depth interviews she has conducted with individuals who are at the “margins” of gaming culture—individuals who are not part of the core demographic (young, white, heterosexual males) that many major gaming studios are assumed to view as their target audience.