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D. Stanley Eitzen. *Fair and Foul: Beyond the Myths and Paradoxes of Sport.* Lanham and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. vii + 187 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-1952-7; $87.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-1951-0.

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Changing the Nature of the Game

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In *Fair and Foul*, Stanley Eitzen argues for broad changes in how sport operates in American culture.[1] Such a call is not especially noteworthy; a number of critics have pointed out the corruption of big-time college athletics, the limited opportunities in positions of authority for women and people of color, and the wide-ranging over-commercialization of sport in our culture. Eitzen, however, locates his argument in something other than mere criticism of sport. He writes his critique from the position of an avowed fan. In so doing, he is able to value what is good about the institution while pushing for improvements. He writes that "even as sport excites and inspires, it has problems. Let's not get rid of sport. Let's make it better. For me, that means sport should be more fun, more inclusive, more humanized, and more ethical" (p. 174).

He is worth listening to. Eitzen, a former president of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport and a recipient of that organization's Distinguished Service Award as well as the author of *Sport in Contemporary Society* and *Sociology of North American Sport*, is a well-known figure in the field. And that field is growing, not just in the economy, but in academia itself. At my college, with an undergraduate enrollment of about 2,200, the Sport Studies department has grown to one of the five largest majors for students since its inception four years ago and has over 150 majors. Students come to it seeing the potential for future employment in a growth industry and hoping to engage in discussions of topics they value–football, basketball, and baseball–in, from their view, the often stultifying arena of academia. The challenge–whether teaching a course on sport and sociology, sport and American culture, or sport and economics–is to help students engage with how sport operates or, as Eitzen puts it, to take it seriously. He writes, "But do we truly understand sport? Can we separate the hype from the reality and the myth from the facts? Do we question the way that sport is organized? Unfortunately, many fans and participants alike have a superficial, uncritical attitude that takes much for granted" (p. 4).

At the heart of sport, Eitzen locates a duality which he sees as common to all human institutions, since it "has positive and negative outcomes for individuals and society" (p. 4). This last phrase is telling, for moreso than many other critics, Eitzen acknowledges the positives that sport can offer, writing that it "can be a magical, wonderful illusion" (p. 174). For instance, while recognizing that sport mirrors society in "the basic elements of bureaucratization, commercialization, racism, sexism, homophobia, greed, exploitation of the powerless by the powerful, alienation, and ethnocentrism," Eitzen also argues that there is something transcendent about sport and that it satisfies our "human desire to identify with something greater than oneself" (p. 3). For much of the book he examines varying dualities or, as he often puts it, paradoxes in such constructions as "Sport Unites, Sport Divides," "Sport is Fair, Sport is Foul," "Sport is Healthy, Sport is Destructive," and "Sport is Expressive, Sport is Controlled." This construction in his argument can lead him too readily into a repetition of his overall assertion that sport functions as a paradox; some of the chapters, while exploring a specific element of sport, essentially make the same overall point about the institution itself, albeit in different contexts. Moreover, representing sport within a structure of a binary model can be somewhat limiting in how we are able to understand it.

Nonetheless, Eitzen is most interested in breaking through the barriers of the myths that surround sport so that we can more clearly understand its place in our culture. He writes:

"Too often we focus on the bright side of the dualities in sport, letting myths guide our perceptions and analyses. I intend to present the reality of sport, including the

good and the bad. Indeed, I emphasize the negative aspects of sport in order to demythologize and demystify it. Yet I do not want to forget the magical nature of sport that is so captivating and compelling. Overcoming this basic contradiction–being critical of sport while retaining a love for it–will enable us to examine the negatives surrounding sport with the goal of seeking alternatives to improve this vital, interesting, and exciting aspect of social life." (p. 8)

If in the first half of the book he often only delineates the dualities within sport, in the second half Eitzen begins to be more outspoken concerning the flaws of the institution that he loves. Here he extends beyond the presentation of paradoxes to presenting arguments about issues, such as big-time college athletics, sport and social mobility, and the personal ownership of professional franchises. In these chapters, Eitzen is at his best, combining the dual roles of the academic and the aficionado, bringing to sport criticism the language and enthusiasm of the fan and not just the skeptic. He rejects, for instance, Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski's dismissal of critics of college sport. "I do not question Coach K's genuine affection for his players or his sincerity about the glories of big-time college sport. I do question his perception and analysis. Coach K takes an individualistic perspective, which means that he does not see–and this is the crucial sociological point–the wrongs that occur because of the way big-time college sport is organized" (pp. 108-109). His close analysis of the operation of sport at major institutions of learning goes a long way toward articulating how and why so much of college athletics compromises higher education.

Throughout the book, Eitzen seeks to account for sociopolitical contexts in his discussion of sport, but in the last few chapters he is more forceful in bringing these contexts to bear on specific arguments and not only to show how sport reflects American culture. For instance, he lays out a synopsis of the reforms in the welfare system in America in the 1990s and skillfully contrasts the cutbacks in aid to the "welfare" provided team owners through public support for new stadiums and arenas. His more pronounced use of these contexts leads to clearer arguments and strong proposals for reform in how sport is organized. His chapter on college athletics is especially striking in his call for a widespread revamping of the system. He argues for changes at all levels, for example, shifting oversight of the system from the NCAA to university presidents, putting coaches into the tenure system, and restricting student eligibility and paying athletes a monthly stipend. He is not naive about the outcome, writing "[t]he problem with the plan that I just outlined is that it will never be implemented" (p. 131). However, he recognizes the central problem and highlights it for readers in such a way that we must engage with it. "The dilemma is this: We like (I like) big-time college sport–the festival, the pageantry, the exuberance, the excitement, and the excellence. But are we then willing to accept the hypocrisy that goes with it?" (p. 132).

Eitzen ultimately proposes changes within sport in eight problem areas: creating codes of ethical conduct at all levels of sport; restructuring children's sport so that they are peer-controlled and not adult-controlled; expanding participation for youth and school participation so that all can gain from its benefits; reforming big-time college athletics; more rigorously enforcing Title IX so that girls and women move closer to equality; pushing for greater representation for racial minorities in positions of authority; shifting ownership of private professional franchises to the public, as with the Green Bay Packers; and lowering the costs of attending a professional sporting event. These reforms matter, as he says, because "[sport] affects each of us, sometimes profoundly" (p. 170). Thus, *Fair and Foul* has real value for readers, especially those who seek to take sport seriously as a site of compelling cultural and sociological interest. Eitzen is right to see the connection between the broader culture and the more specific arena of sport; not only does the culture shape sport in this country, but sport often helps shape the culture. Contemporary figures such as Tiger Woods and and Michael Jordan–as well as such heralded athletes as Billie Jean King and Jackie Robinson–have had an influence that far exceeds their positions as athletes in a particular sport.

Eitzen serves us well in pointing out the complexity of sport–if we emphasize it only from a celebratory or a pessimistic perspective, we fail to engage with the wholeness of the experience for both participants and fans. If we are overly negative, we miss the opportunity to fully embrace the inspirational story of the cyclist Lance Armstrong, who has overcome testicular cancer to reach the top of his sport. If we look at sport with only rose-colored glasses, though, we will fail to recognize how much public money is spent on sport franchises while funding for the arts and for education is so often dropping. Eitzen's book is most compelling, however, when he makes his most articulate arguments for change, when he goes beyond pointing out the paradoxes to taking a stand on them. His proposals for change are more persuasive in that he is open in acknowledging his own bias toward sport as valuable and not merely operating out of a critical viewpoint. Moreover, his belief in the possibility for improvement in what is often a monolithic institution–

see the response to the inclusion of women at the Augusta National golf club–is contagious. He writes, "We can make changes in sport by making changes in social arrangements. We are not passive actors who accept society's arrangements as inevitable. To the contrary, we can be actively engaged in social life, working for the improvement or even the radical change of faulty social structures. This notion that human beings construct and reconstruct society implies another notion–that the personal is political" (p. 172). In *Fair and Foul*, Eitzen welcomes us to join him in making choices that will demythologize sport and break the hold of the status quo so that more can enjoy and participate in this institution that has taken such hold of the American imagination.

Note

[1]. Throughout this review, I use the term "sport" and not "sports," for this is the term that Eitzen uses and a term that is common in the field of sport criticism.

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