

## BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

# Sports Culture and the Varieties of Latin American Identity

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Sports and Nationalism in Latin/o America.** Edited by Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, Robert McKee Irwin, and Juan Poblete. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. xiii + 307. \$95.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781137487186.

**Muscling in on New Worlds: Jews, Sport, and the Making of the Americas.** Edited by Raanan Rein and David M. K. Sheinin. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2014. Pp. x + 196. \$135.00 cloth. ISBN: 9789004284487.

**Sports Culture in Latin American History.** Edited by David M. K. Sheinin. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 239. \$25.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822963370.

**The Sovereign Colony: Olympic Sport, National Identity, and International Politics in Puerto Rico.** By Antonio Sotomayor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. Pp. xix + 360. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780803278813.

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Scholarly interest in sports culture has grown with astonishing speed. A generation ago it was difficult to find more than a handful of serious scholarly treatments about sports and sports culture, and there were few such works on Latin America and the Caribbean. Now it is a rare season that does not see the publication of at least one academic work on Latin American and Caribbean sport, as scholars have joined athletes, coaches, journalists, and fans in acknowledging the immense scale and broad scope of sports in the region. They have come to realize that it is essential to understand sports if we are to understand the region, in part because they have come to understand sports' connection to many other parts of life, from the building of political movements to the region's position in the global economy.<sup>1</sup>

One of the main interests developed by this emerging field of scholarship, like the study of sports in other regions, has been to examine the use of sports in the construction of Latin American and Caribbean identities. Consonant with Eric Hobsbawm's comment that for many Europeans "the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people,"<sup>2</sup> scholars working on sports in the region have been especially interested in the uses to which Latin Americans have put sport in the forging and the expression of nationality. From the Castro regime's advertisement of "revolutionary" baseball as an expression of what it has meant to be Cuban after 1959,<sup>3</sup> to Brazilians' claims that their *jogo bonito* is rooted

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<sup>1</sup> Two important examples are Brenda Elsey, *Citizens and Sportsmen: Fútbol and Politics in Twentieth-Century Chile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011) and Alan M. Klein, *Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Thomas F. Carter, *The Quality of Home Runs: The Passion, Politics, and Language of Cuban Baseball* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

in a racial democracy that embodies Brazilians' genius for mixing races and cultures,<sup>4</sup> Latin Americans have used sports to define their nations, and scholars have attempted to understand their choices.

Much of the early scholarship on the subject told collective, homogenized stories about sports in Latin American and Caribbean countries and focused on well-organized, elite-level men's sports, especially boxing, baseball, *football* (i.e., soccer), and cricket. Among their other contributions, each of the four works reviewed here helps provide a better sense of the complexities and varieties of the Latin American sports experience, especially in relation to national identity, as their authors demonstrate how sports culture affects and helps reveal the significance of gender, region, religion, ethnicity, and ideology in the making of nationality. The four works suggest the extraordinary variety in what it means to be Latin American and the necessity, therefore, to resist claims that sports reveal any one way to be Cuban or Brazilian or—as Raanan Rein and David M. K. Sheinin write in the introduction to their volume—Jewish. What is needed, Rein and Sheinin suggest, is to understand and explore how sports have allowed Jewish and other Latin Americans to “reject a cultural either-or” among their identities as members of ethnic groups and nations, as Latin Americans and Americans, as women and as men, as athletes and as fans, and so on (Rein and Sheinin, 4). Scholars of sports culture are, in short, beginning to move beyond stories of sports as expressions of “authentic” national identities to examine how such identities are constructed, who belongs and who is excluded, and why, and in doing so they enrich not only the study of sports and sports culture but also larger conversations about nations, identities, and citizenship.

Antonio Sotomayor adopts a largely conventional approach to these questions in *The Sovereign Colony*. Like many early scholars of sport, in examining Puerto Rican “Olympism” he focuses on elite-level sports rather than informal practices or activities among the larger population of the island. He is most interested in institutional actors such as José Enrique Monagas, who presided over the island government's efforts to build a sports culture during the mid-twentieth century, and Puerto Ricans' participation in the international Olympic movement. And he relies heavily on the kinds of traditional documentary sources this approach implies—government records, newspaper accounts, and official publications—though he reinforces the documentary record with useful interviews with some of his story's protagonists. Sotomayor provides a granular and chronological view of the individuals and debates of what he calls Puerto Rico's “colonial Olympism,” beginning before annexation by the United States and culminating in the island's hosting of the 1966 Central American and Caribbean Games (CACG), the ultimate affirmation of Puerto Rico's becoming an independent Olympic nation despite US political sovereignty. Focused on institutions and ideologues, he is less attentive to athletes, to coaches, and to fans, whose views seem relevant to his story, not least, as Monagas understood, because of the costs that popular practices often pay when institutions focus on promoting elite athletics.

Within this now-traditional framework, Sotomayor demonstrates that the story of Puerto Rican Olympism illustrates the distinctions Puerto Rican leaders drew between cultural and political nationalism. He argues that Puerto Rican nation builders in the mid-twentieth century, including Monagas and his allies in the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) saw colonial Olympism as a means of satisfying Puerto Ricans' “need to see the nation performed” (11) without sacrificing the connection to the United States upon which their developmentalist program relied. Because Sotomayor gives voice to a small number of Puerto Rican activists and bureaucrats, it is difficult to know just how much Puerto Ricans were indeed satisfied by Olympism's promise of the performance of national identity. Even so, the PPD's electoral successes and the glimpses of popular opinion Sotomayor affords the reader do suggest the plausibility of his claim that, for many Puerto Ricans, cultural not political nationalism was the most important aspect of broadcasting a discrete identity.

Sotomayor emphasizes another kind of complexity as he discusses how Puerto Rican sports administrators defined the nation they promoted. Early on, he notes that that the PPD's reformist version of nationalism was identified with “safe” symbols like the *jíbaro*, the white male farmer associated with humble hard work and the assumed simplicity of rural life (8–9). Although readers might wish for a deeper discussion of how sports nationalism fit into the broader story of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism, Sotomayor does show how colonial Olympism fit into its advocates' view of Puerto Rico as a liminal place, where bridges could be built between Anglo and Latin Americans, with Puerto Ricans playing an ambassadorial role in both directions. When Puerto Ricans carried the American flag in early Olympics and when Monagas became president of

<sup>4</sup> Roger Kettle examines such claims in *The Country of Football: Soccer and the Making of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

the Central American and Caribbean Sports Organization, they demonstrated they were an American, Latin American, and Caribbean people.

The last category is important for two reasons. First, scholars of Latin America seem rarely to know how to handle the non-Spanish-speaking territories of the region, and Sotomayor makes an implicit argument for an inclusive approach, for example when he suggests the similarities between the sports experiences of Puerto Rico and the French overseas departments of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyane. Noting the extraordinary influence of C. L. R. James's work on British Caribbean cricket,<sup>5</sup> Sotomayor reminds us how much we might miss if we adopt a narrow definition of the region, its nationalisms, and its identities. Second, it was in the Caribbean that the disappointments of Puerto Rican sports nationalism were made most explicit. Puerto Rican organizers sought to bar Cuban participation from the 1966 CACG, as competition between Cuban and Puerto Rican approaches to development echoed in sports. But the United States refused to countenance the exclusion so as to avoid stoking the coals of its conflict with the Soviet Union, and Puerto Ricans were reminded that though they were sovereign in sports theirs was not a nation-state. The episode serves as an excellent example of Sotomayor's larger thesis: that sports clarify the complexities of Puerto Rican nationalism; that we learn from Puerto Rico to resist easy classifications based on geography or on how ideas about the nation are enacted; and that we understand the wide variety of identities available to modern Latin Americans.

The contributors to *Sports and Nationalism in Latin/o America* further deepen our sense of how sports relate to Latin American nationalism and reveal its complexities. Guided by a literary and cultural studies approach underutilized by scholars of sports, the authors seek to answer standard questions about how Latin Americans have used sports to define nations and broadcast nationalism, and many also do important work to highlight the performative nature of sports, which Sotomayor mentions. As Pablo Alabarces says in a retrospective essay on his influential *Fútbol y patria*,<sup>6</sup> sports can be understood as a "cultural machine . . . a producer of national narratives" (Alabarces in *Sports and Nationalism*, 32). They are not settled, completed texts but rather are practiced, performed, and lived. They are highly negotiable and flexible, which goes a long way to account for their enduring relationship to nationalism.

One of the main concerns of the contributors is to demonstrate how Latin Americans have used sports to negotiate belonging and citizenship. In essays about Latin American football, Mexican boxing, and Colombian Olympic sports, Joshua Nadel, Hortensia Moreno, and Chloe Rutter-Jensen show how sports nationalism has helped exclude nontraditional athletes from communities built on narrow ideas about who should play and who can embody the nation. In a useful historical survey, Nadel explains the region-wide pattern of exclusion of women from football as a product of worries about football's effect on women's health and organizers' fears that women footballers might challenge nationalists' sense of their countries as essentially masculine. Moreno explains that similar reasons account for contemporary women boxers' inability to serve as sports heroes in Mexico, despite boxing's popularity, the success of individual athletes, and the performative work of athletes who, like Ana María "La Guerrera" Torres, attempt to embody popular notions of the nation. Rutter-Jensen demonstrates that when Colombian Paralympians win, the state and national media advertise them as symbols of the society's inclusiveness, but the reality is one of few resources, relatively little attention, and alienation from the national community. These essays suggest what sports can reveal about the meaning of citizenship in Latin America; for women and the disabled, playing sports and representing the nation is often not enough, and they remain marginal figures, involved in the national conversation but never central to it.

Other authors analyze how geography affects belonging. Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste emphasizes the importance of region in the making of nations in his analysis of Colombia, where boxing has been identified with the largely Afro-Colombian coast, and cycling evinced a more hegemonic Andean personality. Fueled by the rise of drug cartels in the 1940s, professional football brought together men of all types and thereby, he argues, served Colombians as other sports could not, as a vehicle for nationalism. Juan Carlos Rodríguez explores the relationship between geography and belonging in an analysis of film documentaries about Cuban baseball and shows how they challenge the notion that the nation inhabits only the island. Instead, filmmakers assert that baseball migrants extend Cuba into the United States (and back again), challenging the state's legitimacy by challenging its baseball narrative. And Juan Poblete uses popular nonfiction portrayals to show how Latinos in the United States have used football to assert they belong. He shows that the border appears wherever immigrants and long-term residents argue about the use of playing fields,

<sup>5</sup> C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Pablo Alabarces, *Fútbol y patria: El fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2002).

emphasizing that the place of performance matters a great deal, for symbolic reasons and because it often involves arguments over limited resources. In an essay about a very different topic, Renata Maria Toledo and Maria Tarcisa Silva Bega illustrate a related point. They note that the 1998 Brazilian federal constitution guaranteed citizens a right to sports, but that—like in Puerto Rico as it pursued Olympism—in practice mass sports suffer as administrators channel resources to support elite athletes, who offer the promise of international glory.

Inherent in arguments about who belongs to the nation are arguments about what the nation is. The other contributors to the volume develop analyses of this subject, always with an eye to the possibility of various definitions of the nation. Sergio Villena Fiengo focuses on shifting media and political reactions to Costa Rica's participation in the football World Cup. He contrasts the "nationalist apotheosis" of 1990, which Costa Ricans depicted as a collective, team-centered achievement, with 2002, when the president Miguel Ángel Rodríguez co-opted the team's success and portrayed it as a victory of individual endeavor which resonated with his market-friendly platform. A similar pattern emerged in Brazil, which Vander Casaqui detects in coverage of the 2010 World Cup by the Globo television network. Rather than a traditional depiction of the Brazilian team as an embodiment of a magical and joyous nation, Globo used video biographies of the team's players to depict Brazil as a warrior country in which motivated individuals could accomplish great things, as athletes and as businessmen. Examining a much less studied sport, Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee offers a fascinating analysis of surfing advocates' articulation of Peru as a "sporting empire" (Hough-Snee in *Sports and Nationalism*, 202). He shows that surfers have developed a coherent story of Peruvian surfing rooted in pre-Encounter indigenous culture, developed via contact with Hawaiians before its "discovery" by Californians, and therefore authentically Peruvian. As Hough-Snee says, the fact that surfing in Peru remains largely a male, upper-middle-class (and of course coastal) preserve reminds us of the imagination employed in crafting national stories. These authors make clear just how useful sport is to uncovering the plotlines and themes of national narratives, as well as the choices narrators make and how such chronicles change over time.

Finally, Robert McKee Irwin and Yago Colás, in separate contributions, suggest how Latin American sports can clarify identity issues in the United States. Irwin shows that in their depictions of Argentine tennis player Guillermo Vilas in the 1970s, American journalists displayed a tendency to deal in category types, Vilas playing the timeworn role of Latin Lover. This was useful because it helped denationalize him from a troublesome Argentina, helped diminish the threat of his foreign sexuality, and helped sell the rapidly modernizing sport. Colás sees a similar method employed by Americans who comment on the Argentine Emanuel "Manu" Ginobili and use him to argue about the meaning of basketball. He shows that prominent basketball commentators have indulged in essentialist and racially fraught thinking, denationalizing Ginobili as a "great white hope" who might save the "right"—that is, white—way to play the game (Colás in *Sports and Nationalism*, 250). Irwin and Colás emphasize American commentators' inability or unwillingness to see past a black/white axis of discussions about race and nation, and their uncertainty about how to engage Latinos and Latin Americans. This uncertainty takes on a different tenor in American discussions of sports in which many Latinos and Latin Americans participate, such as football and baseball, which helps indicate why it is important to examine less-studied sports. Such sports help reveal the variety of the Latin American experience, not least in the making of nations and national narratives.

Issues of belonging and of defining identities are the focus as well of the essays in *Muscling in on New Worlds*. Rein and Sheinin challenge traditional geographies of scholarship about the Americas by bringing together scholars working on Argentina, Peru, and the United States, though they rarely cross national boundaries in an explicit way; most of the essays here focus on the United States. Still, the authors' complication of the notion of homogenous national and other identities provides useful lessons for those who study Latin America. Several of the authors are interested, as Moreno is, for example, in how athletes use sport to claim belonging and to challenge stereotypes which would exclude them from the nation. Gerald R. Gems provides an overview of American Jewish athletes' accomplishments and the tensions they revealed, between Jewish and non-Jewish Americans and also within Jewish communities, about whether Jews could or should accept the larger culture's values.

In an essay on depictions of male Jewishness in the American-made *Madagascar* movies, Nathan Abrams asserts that for some filmmakers the answer to this question is negative, that the stereotypically bookish and unathletic Jew can never fully adapt, either to athletic culture or to American culture. However, Abrams argues, this allows Jews the distance they need to critique the dominant culture and to preserve distinctive identities. Rebecca T. Alpert makes a complementary point in her analysis of the well-known stories of Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax, who insisted that they could be observant Jews, baseball heroes, and

fully American, and who rejected both popular expectations of the hypermasculine and anti-intellectual sports star and the stereotype of the unathletic Jew. Neither Greenberg nor Koufax was terribly devout, but, the historian Jeffrey S. Gurock shows, students representing the Orthodox Yeshiva University in official intercollegiate competitions have proved space exists in the modern United States for athletes who need not choose between their religion, their ethnicity, and their nationality. Eleanor F. Odenheimer, Rebecca Buchanan, and Tanya Prewitt show that the Jewish yoga instructors who they interviewed also dismiss the notion that they must choose between identities; they reject allegations of cultural appropriation and claim ownership over yoga as a “universal technology” (Odenheimer, Buchanan, and Prewitt, in *Muscling In*, 59) through which they privatize religious practice and perform Jewishness.

Raanan Rein and Alejandro Meter, in separate chapters, show how Jews in Latin America have used sports in similar ways as their North American counterparts. Rein has contributed essays to this book and to Sheinin’s edited volume, discussed below, drawn from his important work on the Atlanta club in Buenos Aires, widely regarded as a Jewish club in a Jewish neighborhood.<sup>7</sup> In this volume, he provides analysis of the ways that fans talk about Atlanta and shows that they see it as a venue where they can cultivate their sense of being both Jewish and Argentine. Meter shows that in their novels the Argentine Ricardo Feierstein and the Peruvian Isaac Goldemberg depict football in a similar manner. It is through football that their characters come to feel truly Argentine and fully Peruvian. Rein and Meter emphasize the point that the sports experience is heavily gendered, football in Latin America serving as a means for Jewish men to negotiate their engagement with the larger society. Rein notes, though, that for fans of Atlanta football provides an entry point for entire families; his essay is a reminder that there is still far too little scholarship on Latin American sports fans, women as well as men. Finally, Sheinin joins Meter as one of the few scholars reviewed here to conduct a truly comparative analysis. He analyzes the careers of the Argentine Víctor Galíndez and the American Mike Rossman to demonstrate how boxing—the sport associated with athletes of African descent in Argentina but cast as a multiethnic working-class practice in the United States—in the 1970s mapped onto ethnic and class identities in the two countries. The comparison helps Sheinin highlight those distinctive identifiers and thereby the malleability of sports, of Jewishness, and of nationality, emphasizing the volume’s main theme.

One of the strengths of Sheinin’s edited volume *Sports Culture in Latin American History* is the inclusion of essays—like those by Hough-Snee and Odenheimer, Buchanan, and Prewitt discussed above—with an expansive view of sports culture, with essays on boxing, wrestling, and football but also on croquet, capoeira, and body image. Rein has contributed another piece on the Atlanta club to this collection; here he focuses on the narrative work club members and outsiders have performed to imagine it as Jewish: it has never been a heavily Jewish club and its team has fielded few Jewish players. Atlanta is a Jewish club because Jewish and non-Jewish Argentines have chosen to perceive it that way. Informed heavily by history’s cultural turn, the other contributors also focus closely on Latin Americans’ choices as they have used sports to narrate national and other identities. Michael Donoghue shows how the Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos appropriated the image of the boxer Roberto Durán to promote the country as macho, mestizo, and independent, regardless of inconsistencies between Torrijos’s vision and the boxer’s real story. What mattered was how Torrijos could use Durán, something made clear when Torrijos discarded the boxer after an embarrassing loss. Sheinin inspects Colombia’s boxing identity and shows why it should be defined, as Fernández L’Hoeste notes, as coastal and black. Sheinin shows that *costeños* draw on memories of runaway slave communities and success in boxing to claim ownership over the sport and to carve out a space of their own in a country often defined as mestizo. They have composed a script of resilience which empowers them. However, like other sporting scripts in Latin America,<sup>8</sup> outsiders have sometimes commodified it for their own benefit.

Brazilian capoeira has received some scholarly attention in recent years, but, as Maya Talmon-Chvaicer points out, some scholars have been tempted by nationalist narratives that depict its rise from suppression to renown as an uncomplicated story of resistance and racial democratization.<sup>9</sup> Katya Wesolowski engages these narratives directly and shows how *capoeiristas* themselves, and not only politicians and other outsiders, have contributed to them, for example in the common assertion that capoeira is essentially masculine because an allegedly unfeminine and potentially violent “scripted loss of control” (Wesolowski

<sup>7</sup> Raanan Rein, *Los bohemios de Villa Crespo: Judíos y fútbol en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Maurício Drumond, *Nações em jogo: Esporte e propaganda política em Vargas e Perón* (Rio de Janeiro: Apicuri, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Maya Talmon-Chvaicer, *The Hidden History of Capoeira: A Collision of Cultures in the Brazilian Battle Dance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

in *Sports Culture in Latin American History*, 174) is necessary to its practice. She also shows that such narratives are unsettled, and that practitioners continue to disagree about whether capoeira is a sport, a dance, or an entire culture; indeed, capoeira frustrates easy categorization and reminds us not to define sports culture narrowly. Ken Lehman takes up similar themes in an essay on contemporary Bolivian *lucha libre* wrestling and the experience of athletes who participate in it dressed as *cholas*, the in-between women who are neither modern and mestiza nor traditional and Indian. The sport is highly scripted, and the narrative of indigenous pride and resilience that *cholitas luchadoras* enact has attracted fans, promoters, and filmmakers, the last hoping to tell a story of empowerment and revolution. However, Lehman is careful to point out, though the narrative is a powerful one, like other Latin American female athletes, Bolivian women wrestlers continue to confront sports structures dominated by men, in their case male promoters who control venues and even the cholita brand.

These scholars complicate how we define sport, and Joshua Hotaka Roth, Carolyne Ryan Larson, and Ageeth Sluis go even farther to expand notions of sports culture. Anthropologist Roth shows that elderly Japanese Brazilians in São Paulo see gateball, a form of croquet, as a distillation of “Japanese” teamwork and precision and also as a means of contributing to their community, because they maintain courts in sometimes marginal neighborhoods. Like Jews throughout the Americas and many other seeming outsiders, these Japanese Brazilians use sport to challenge the notion that they must choose between their identities. Larson and Sluis each draws connections between sports culture and body image, in essays on nineteenth-century writing about Patagonian Indians and postrevolutionary Mexican urban aesthetics, respectively. Larson demonstrates that travelers and anthropologists crafted an identity for Indians in Argentina as “natural athletes” who must vanish when confronted with the march of progress but who would leave behind a model of strength and endurance for future residents confronting the region’s harsh conditions. Sluis shows how the Mexican revolutionary dilemma of promoting tradition while pursuing modernization played out in aesthetic discourse, for example in public sculpture and urban planning, and she argues that the Art Deco movement, especially its ideal of lithe and athletic feminine physicality, provided revolutionaries a form language between old and new, Western and indigenous. Mexican revolutionaries, that is, rejected the cultural either-or. Larson and Sluis emphasize the utility nation builders have seen in athletic culture and they highlight the narrative constructions at work in investing it with meaning, a subject that interests all of the contributors to the volume and lends it coherence, in spite of the superficial differences between essays on everything from football to croquet to travel writing.

Challenging settled notions of what sports are, the Sheinin volume helps emphasize one of the intriguing possibilities of the field: that questions which have guided recent scholars of sport—about ritual, about performance, and about embodiment—might be posed in the study of subjects not obviously connected to sports. For example, a more expansive view of sports culture might involve scholars of sport in analysis of Carnival celebrations and beauty pageants, which throughout the region have employed competitive constructs drawn directly out of modern sports cultures and, of course, rely on bodily performance and ritual practice just as much as do competitive sports. Peruvian football, Dominican baseball, and Barbadian cricket still need studying, but so too do gauchos’ horseback pastimes, tourism in Patagonia, and Bahamian Junkanoo celebrations, and scholars of sport might contribute a great deal to discussions about those subjects.<sup>10</sup> Related to this, it is important that scholars look beyond elite-level and well-organized sports to better understand Latin Americans’ informal practice of sports and the playing of sports outside professional ranks. These sports cultures often compete for resources, as Toledo and Bega show, and it seems clear that this competition has often helped make Latin American sports a means of marginalization rather than inclusion. Scholars of sports in the region must consider not only the benefits but also the costs of elite-level athletics.

The scholars reviewed here also suggest the importance of challenging assumptions about the geography of Latin America, important examples being Sotomayor’s reminder of Puerto Rico’s connections to the non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and the contributions of Poblete, Irwin, and Colás about the connections and disconnections between Latin American and United States sports. One of the features of the collections reviewed here is their geographic breadth, which encourages us to think beyond national boundaries; excellent synthetic essays by Ari F. Sclar in the Rein and Sheinin book and Laura Podalsky in the Sheinin volume point out some of the patterns individual authors might not see. And Nadel, Meter, and Sheinin indicate in their essays the potential of explicitly comparative analysis. As Rodríguez points out in his

<sup>10</sup> For a rare exception, see Richard W. Slatta, “The Demise of the Gaucho and the Rise of Equestrian Sport in Argentina,” *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 97–110.

analysis of Cuban baseball documentaries (in *Sports and Nationalism*), sports in Latin America have rarely been bound by national borders, and scholarship of sports in the region must be similarly unbound.

Many years ago now, C. L. R. James insisted that it is impossible to understand Caribbean cricket if one considers only the game itself, inside the lines of the oval, and not the society in which it takes place and which gives it meaning. In order to learn what we can from Latin American sports we must look past lines sketched out on football fields and baseball diamonds, and we must also think beyond boundaries between countries, between professional and amateur athletics, and between modern sports and other forms of sports culture. The contributors to these volumes have done important work to enrich the field, especially in challenging settled notions about Latin American identities. To build on their contributions will require work with official documents, with popular media sources, and with organizers, coaches, athletes, and fans in elite-level sports, and it will also mean listening to voices rarely heard in national media, athletes rarely considered by sports and civic governing bodies, and practices not always defined as sporting ones. Most of all, it will mean challenging the nationalist narratives that dominated early writing on sports in the region, which were often romantic and celebratory and also limiting and exclusive, helping to marginalize those who seemed not to belong and to homogenize the experience and story of Latin American sports.

### Author Information

Gregg Bocketti is associate professor of history at Transylvania University. His research interests include sports, civic ritual, public memory, and immigration in Brazil and Argentina. He is author of *The Invention of the Beautiful Game: Football and the Making of Modern Brazil* (University Press of Florida, 2016) and other works on Brazilian football. He is currently working on a book on the meaning and performance of citizenship during patriotic festivals in early twentieth-century Brazil and Argentina.

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