

Women in Canadian Life

Sports, Jean Cochrane, Abby Hoffman, Pat Kincaid, Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977, pp. 96, paperback \$2.95.

Sharon Foster
Myrna Mather

Sports is the third book in the series *Women in Canadian Life*. Although this specific text was created with a school audience in mind, its lively presentation will have wide appeal for the general reader. It concentrates on an area of female endeavor that has, until now, been neglected. That is the area of women's participation in amateur and professional sport.

Abby Hoffman's introduction elucidates the necessity for a historical view of women's sports activities in order to 'put to bed some myths about women and athleticism.' The years 1920-35 were the golden era of sports for Canadian Women. Such forgotten sports heroines as Bobby Rosenfeld, Ethel Catherwood and the Edmonton Grads excelled in competitive sports during these years. Our performance in the 1928 Olympics was outstanding. All of these stories are revealed vividly in chapter four 'Head Start.' There are nine chapters, each with its own suggestions for discussion and further readings.

The photographs reproduced in the book deserve special mention. Almost every page displays fascinating pictures with informative subtitles. These illustrations by themselves show the

progression of women's participation in and rejection of athletic activities through the years. The athlete's garb clearly depicts the attitudes of the times. Such memorable photos as the Carlton Place Canoe Clubs team of 1902 and a Canadian girls' hockey team (1900) are priceless archival documents. These and many more contribute greatly to the appeal of the book. Excerpts from newspapers and magazines show how cultural constraints and attitudes affected the willingness and enthusiasm of women to compete or participate in various events.

The authors discuss contemporary issues as well. The illusion that athletic activities are too physically demanding for young women still exists. The 'joy of physical effort' enables young women to strive for their personal best both physically and psychologically. The authors point out that media coverage and the growth of professional men's teams have discouraged women's efforts. Lack of facilities is still a major problem. In the chapter entitled 'For the Record,' physiological differences between males and females are discussed and here the implications of these differences are put into perspective.

Of special interest to a teacher are the suggestions for action projects at the end of each chapter. The book is a versatile teaching tool.

This is a time of renewed interest in physical fitness for women. This book gives us a full and comprehensive overview of our rich Canadian sports history and a look into the issues of the future.

Women in Sports (photo essay)



Girls Softball, downtown Toronto, 1930?

The James Collection, City of Toronto Archives