
As a former rodeo coach at New Mexico Junior College and founder of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) Alumni, Mahoney has the credentials to write this first monograph on the history of intercollegiate rodeo. Her in-depth understanding of the sport, and insider contacts, give her access to the scattered archival materials and participants whom she interviewed. However, this closeness to the sport is also a detriment to objectivity and historical contextualization: she glorifies the participants and turns the book into a decade-by-decade list of who won what events.

Mahoney explores the beginnings of college rodeo at small schools in the western United States. Noting the difficulties of changing the perceptions of rodeo as a show event similar to a gymkhana into a bona fide intercollegiate sport, she explains the formation of the competing associations that attempted to legitimize rodeo as a college athletic activity beyond the club level. She covers the dichotomy between individual and pairs events that made it difficult for schools to understand those relationships to traditional team sports. Yet she does not indicate any use of the colleges' archives to include the viewpoints of administrators toward college rodeo. The fluid dynamics between college and professional rodeo precluded NCAA endorsement but Mahoney does not delve deeply into this realm, rather concerning herself more with how the cowboys can participate in both. She carefully touches on the issues of inadequate collegiate funding and external corporate financial and product support, but fails to fully explore the ramifications of NASCAR-type sponsorships on amateur athletics, or the contributions of the smokeless tobacco industry toward an underage population. Mahoney closes a critical eye to these relationships.

Mahoney covers well the role of women in college rodeo. As Title IX required equal opportunities in intercollegiate athletics for women, the cowgirls in rodeo took full advantage of the regulation, as did the junior colleges that offered rodeo scholarships to both men and women. The junior colleges could more easily accommodate women in sport because they did not have to focus on funding powerhouse teams in football and basketball. Mahoney captures the changing role of women from beauty queens who could ride a horse, to a few separate events tacked onto a mostly-male competition, to separate and equal events, to mixed pairs events, to coaching and association management.

The continuity of the sport is an ever-present theme. Whether securing financial support, transportation to regional and national competitions, standardizing the rules, or obtaining adequate numbers of commercial livestock for the events, college
rodeo participants work hard as volunteers to ensure their sport continues from year to year. The regional and national events also seem to be times for meeting potential spouses and perpetuating rodeo as a family tradition. College rodeo is a generational sport with the children of early cowboys and cowgirls participating in some of the same events as their parents.

The narrative bogs down when Mahoney discusses the conflict in regional rules and championship locations. From there the history devolves into chapters by decade with endless lists of who won what events with a few personal facts thrown in for colour. She seems more intent on recognizing every winner than analysing the sport.

Eight appendices include the participants in, and winners of, the first intercollegiate rodeo in 1939; the representative schools at the meetings to organize the NIRA in 1948–49; the list of Miss College Rodeo winners, 1949–92 (some years had no pageant); the charter board of directors of NIRA Alumni; the first NIRA national champions and contestants in 1949; all of the NIRA champions (by college and by year) and team championship records, 1949–2003.

Recommended only where interest in college rodeo is high, and for academic collections with strengths in college sports history.

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Ms. Womack, neither an athlete nor a sports fan, has produced a fascinating, thoroughly researched, and extremely detailed book with regard to sport and its images in art, literature and song. She has combined her background in journalism and anthropology to create a volume replete with many examples of art (paintings, sketches, sculpture), prose and poetry, and song. The breadth of her research extends from ancient civilizations to the present day. This is not a book to be read in one sitting; there is too much information to absorb in a short amount of time.

The brief, but engaging, Preface is essential to read at the onset. Ms. Womack explains her raison d'être for choosing this particular subject; in fact, she states that she did not choose the subject but that the subject chose her.

The book is divided as follows: PART 1. SPORT AS SYMBOL, which includes Chapter One – Heroic Dramas and Athletic Actors; PART 2. THE ADVERSARY IN NATURE with Chapters Two – The Hunt: Power of Life and Death and Chapter Three – The Hunt Domesticated: Ritual Origins of the Bullfight; PART 3. THE HUMAN ADVERSARY, with Chapter Four – Combat Sports: The Socialization of Conflict and Chapter Five – War Games; PART 4. THE ADVERSARY WITHIN, with