and add context to Ribowsky’s account, at no point does the author explain to the reader the shortcomings or limitations of oral history, nor does he acknowledge or try to analyze any bias these interview subjects might have had. Although this book’s objective is to peel away the layers of myth that shroud Gibson’s life, it relies heavily on the testimony of those who might have sought to aggrandize the star catcher’s accomplishments and personality.

Overall, however, Ribowsky’s *Josh Gibson* is a valuable contribution to the historiography. It is the most comprehensive work to date on the most feared hitter to ever play in the Negro leagues. Ribowsky shows that Gibson was not merely the “black Babe Ruth,” but a baseball player unlike any other in his era, black or white.

**Encyclopedia of British Horseracing**

By Wray Vamplew and Joyce Kay. Published in 2005 by Routledge, London and New York (383 pp., $22.99 U.S.)

Reviewed by Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State University

This is not your typical encyclopedia with entries for all the famous jockeys, trainers, owners, racetracks, and horses. Although Vamplew and Kay do include all of the above in moderation, they primarily focus on the broader picture of British horseracing, especially the underbelly involving drugs, alcohol, accidents, and animal welfare. Leavened by the positive aspects of charitable work, and racing as portrayed in film and drama, literature and writing, and music, the book offers a balanced view of the sport in Great Britain and the impact of—and on—British racing around the world.

Vamplew and Kay provide substantive entries for their topics replete with analyses and one or three suggestions for further reading. Bracketting every alphabetical section, they insert a “Horsebox” and a “Moneybox,” each with snippets of information about notable horses and winnings, respectively. An appendix contains a chronology of British horseracing, 1540–2004. The list of 179 entries and a substantial index offer access to the people, places, and topics mentioned. However, whereas alcohol rates its own entry, a disease such as bulimia can only be alluded to within the entry for weight.

Despite an assumption that the reader understands the nuances of British weights and measures (a jockey’s weight is measured in stones rather than pounds, which are shed to lose weight); racetrack colloquialisms, such as a *trainer’s yard*, rather than a *stable*; and that jockeys *partner* horses rather than *ride* them, the book is accessible to non-British readers. Whether reading scattered entries for quick look-up informational value or cover-to-cover to gain the full flavor of British racing, the encyclopedia provides an encompassing look at both the history of, and contemporary issues in, jumping and flat racing.

The sports historian can use this book as a jumping off point for in-depth research ideas, or to clarify the differing responsibilities of the Jockey Club and the British Horseracing Board. This is a welcome addition to horse racing literature for its inclusion of previously avoided topics. The few touches of humor are a joy to stumble across ("Less than one horse in 100 needs to be tranquillised for a flight.

Unlike humans, horses are not aware that planes can crash.” [p. 313]). Rather than a dry recounting of facts, Vamplew and Kay address head-on the controversial topics in thoughtful essays. Atypical of the usual encyclopedia, the authors express their opinions, but also leave the conclusions to the reader. “Jockeys’ weights are illogical, artificially imposed, and dangerous to health, but they are unlikely to change as there are too many vested interests, including most existing jockeys who fear even more competition in the labour market if weight levels are raised significantly” (p. 339).

This is an essential purchase for racing scholars and fans.

**Sports: The First Five Millennia**

By Allen Guttmann. Published in 2004 by University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA (448 pp., $34.95 U.S.)

Reviewed by Duncan R. Jamieson, Ashland University

This lucid history of sports is a masterwork. Allen Guttmann is perhaps the only scholar with the depth and breadth to produce such a volume. In hard cover, it is encyclopedic, a wonderful read and a great reference; in paperback, it will be a must-read text for sports history classes. Beginning with ancient sports, Guttmann quickly, but not hastily, moves into the English origins of modern sports and their spread through the British Empire. The remainder of the book examines sports in different locales, different venues, and different types of sports.

In his introduction, Guttmann acknowledges postmodernism, but concludes that a narrative approach to sports history is the appropriate vehicle. In his conclusion, he states clearly that no such thing as postmodern sports exists, although postmodernism might be “in reference to the experience of the spectator rather than to the formal-structural characteristics of the sports” (p. 324). There is, he believes, similarities in the development of sports across cultures and across time periods and that these similarities are at least as important as any differences that exist. Sports, as Guttmann so ably declares, are integral to the understanding of human cultures. They impact and are impacted by class, race, and gender. A complete understanding of a society and its past, then, requires knowledge of its sporting history.

The best aspect of this book, besides its encyclopedic content, is Guttmann’s writing style. His choice of words and his phrasing make it difficult to put the book down. More importantly, his writing demonstrates just how central and significant sports are to various cultures. To cite three examples, when discussing baseball’s economic and legal status in the United States, exempt from antitrust legislation, Guttmann writes that when “confronted with economic injustice and legal absurdity, the [Supreme Court] justices wallowed in nostalgia” (p. 137). Next, in a chapter on modern sports in Asia, when describing cricket’s failure to take hold in Japan, the author did find cricket cited in the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, providing “information on insects of the order Orthoptera” (p. 221). The third example, although there are many, many more, follows a discussion of soccer in Africa, where players engage in a variety of practices that might seem strange to people in Westernized, industrial cultures. Not allowing anyone to feel too comfortable or complacent in their sophistication, however, Guttmann points