Coupling urban history and sports history can be a winning combination. Riess paints a broad picture of organized sports in cities from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries while Click focuses on amusements, including sports, in three nineteenth-century southern cities. Similar in topic, the books approach their themes from different perspectives.

Riess, a history professor at Northeastern Illinois University, edits the Journal of Sport History and has written books and contributed chapters on baseball, sports, and culture in America. Using a combination of historical and urban and regional planning terminology, Riess introduces sport in the walking city, 1820-1870; the industrialized radial city, 1870-1960; and the suburban era, 1945-1980. He concentrates on baseball, horse racing, bowling, billiards, boxing, cycling, and basketball and ties them to socioeconomic background, ethnicity and race, leisure, and available space. Riess concentrates heavily on New York City, historically the center of organized sport, but also includes Chicago and, to a much lesser degree, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and San Francisco.

Riess indicates the purpose of this study is "to identify and analyze the impact of city building upon sport in three different periods of American urban history." A positive sports ideology promoted by the elite and upper middle classes prompted the middle class and immigrant groups to emulate them by organizing their own sports clubs. The choice of a sport depended upon proximity to residence, leisure time and cost of attending and participating. Space in urban areas declined, forcing sports like baseball to the cheaper out-of-town areas and the less space- hungry basketball to schoolyards and indoor arenas. While the various classes and ethnic groups participated in the same sports, they did not compete together or against each other. When they attended the same spectator sport, they sat in separate sections segregated by the price of tickets. Space played an important role in sport. Private clubs sponsored by the elite could afford prime downtown locations or large suburban tracts. The middle and lower classes frequented the semipublic (multipurpose arenas such as Madison Square Garden in New York City) and public spaces (Central Park) which arose from the municipal parks movement. Urban residents adapted their sport to the limits of the available space.

Riess also discusses the ties of baseball, boxing, and horse racing to urban politics and, later, for the latter two, to organized crime. The professionalization of sports is linked to urbanization. Riess concludes that "sport, then, is not merely a recreational activity that happened to take place in cities, but is an institution that has been shaped, reshaped, and further molded by the interplay of the elements comprising the process of urbanization."

The burgeoning organized sports movement encouraged young single men to channel their energies away from "traditional lowlife sporting culture" (cockfights, for example) and into more socially acceptable activities. The sports credo also provided a model for immigrants to follow to join the mainstream, and offer a release from the stressful urban environment.

Riess has skillfully presented a plausible argument for the interaction of sports and cities. Because he is dealing with organized sports that can only flourish in metropolitan areas, he is forced to generalize from New York and Chicago what it was like in other urban areas throughout the country. His findings raise questions about the relationship of sports and urbanization in other areas. For comparison, further research by historians would be a welcome addition to local and regional history.

One such book, albeit in a narrower time frame (1800-1870) but with broader coverage beyond sports, is Patricia C. Click's The Spirit of the Times. Concentrating on amusements in three nineteenth-century southern towns (Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond), Click examines the use of leisure time by the upper and middle classes. Click finds, as does Riess, that socioeconomic determined which amusements people attended, the attitudes toward specific amusements, and the acceptance of amusements in general. Hampered more so than Riess by the limited number of urban areas in the nineteenth-century south, Click chose Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond because "they were alike enough to offer the possibility of generalization but different enough to suggest some distinctions because of size and the composition of their respective populations."

Click explores the shifting attitudes toward various amusements and toward amusement itself. Some of the amusements examined include the exhibition, museum, lecture, theater, horse racing, gambling, and cockfighting. She investigates the gradual change from amusement as educational experience to acceptance of amusement as entertainment. Like Riess, Click finds social control and social status at the heart of the matter. In these three cities the social classes did not mix at amusements and "the distinction between high culture and popular culture grew clearer." The Spirit of the Times is an excellent study of sports and other amusements on the local level. Both this book and City Games contribute new insights into popular culture and local history on a comparative basis.

Susan Hambarger
Virginia State Library and Archives
Richmond, Virginia