Bayer from the world of rowing; Dana Chladek, who won the bronze in the whitewater kayaking slalom event at the 1992 Olympics; Amy Chapman Kleinshcrodt and Betsy Alison, who left indelible marks in the world of sailing; Julie Croteau in baseball; the women’s ice hockey team that won the Olympic gold medal in 1998; gutsy skiers such as Betty Woolsey who skied in the first Olympic event for women, and more recent stars like Suzy Chaffee, Tamara McKinney, and Picabo Street; and free style and mogul skiers such as Donna Weinbrecht and Nikki Stone.

Each essay is a joy to read. The front and back inside covers provide a time line, beginning in 776 BC and ending in 1998. Each chapter includes three small black-and-white photos; if anything should be changed about this book, it could use more and larger photographs. The text, however, is so rich and descriptive that this minor shortcoming does not limit the impact of this historical treasury. While these essays are profiles driven, they also reveal the political realities and cultural nuances present at the time. These women writers have moved beyond the usual and commonplace, resulting in the commemoration of an important chapter in American history; one never before documented in such a dramatic fashion.

—Robin D. Mittelstaedt
Ohio University


Scooter Toby Davidson and Valerie Anthony interviewed ten women jockeys about their lives and careers on the track. By asking each the same questions, the interviewers elicit answers that form both a pattern of similar responses and unique viewpoints.

Sandy Schleiffers, the first woman to be admitted to the Jockey’s Guild, reminisces in the book’s foreword about breaking the gender barrier in 1969. Mary Jo Festle’s introduction places the book in context of the history of female athletes and of horse racing in the United States. Just like African-American athletes being held to a higher standard—not equal to but better than their white counterparts—the pressure on the first generation of women jockeys precluded them from making any mistakes that would jeopardize their careers and that of future women jockeys. The second generation, interviewed for this book, has attained a high level of success in a fiercely competitive profession.

Each woman discusses growing up, how she became a jockey, difficulties and triumphs in her career, advice to young girls wanting to become jockeys, and her social life. The jockeys’ individuality shines through the somewhat repetitive of the format.

The women, from backgrounds both privileged and poor, share in common a love for animals, an interest in their own physical fitness, and an ability to communicate with people as well as horses. For a majority of them their social lives revolve around the track.
Of those who grew up at the track, Donna Barton and Rosemary Homeister, Jr. are second generation women jockeys, Kristi Chapman’s father is a trainer, and Darci Rice’s father had harness horses. Diane Nelson, Julie Krone, Paula Keim-Bruno, Jill Jellison, and Dodie Duys had their own horses when they were children. Gwen Jocson learned to ride on a neighbor’s show jumping horses. Five are children of divorce and Homeister’s father died when she was a teenager. Two graduated from, and two dropped out of, college. Only Duys’ parents disapproved of her becoming a jockey.

The book could have used some serious fact checkers and proofreaders. There are four easily verifiable errors in the glossary: the Belmont Stakes is run the first Saturday in June, not in mid-month; a bug is an asterisk on the racing program to indicate an apprentice jockey is riding the horse; a colt is a male horse less than five years old; and in the Triple Crown the Belmont Stakes is run three weeks after the Preakness. The appendix identifying America’s first female jockeys omits Mary Bacon’s suicide. Six typographical errors misspell Jorge Velasquez, Remington Park, Tenafly, Saratoga, Keeneland (seven times), and foremost. At one point the book says Homeister was the first women (sic) and a typo cites The South Carolina Jockey Club books publication date as 1957 rather than 1857.

Liberally illustrated with black-and-white photographs of the jockeys from their childhood to the winner’s circle, Great Women in the Sport of Kings offers the sports historian a glimpse into the complex lives of a unique group of female athletes. The book is a first step toward a full-scale study of women jockeys—the failures as well as the successes. As inspiration, the small coffee table book will appeal to young women interested in pursuing horse racing as a career. Research historians will want less repetition of answers and more in-depth probing of the subjects.

—SUSAN HAMBURGER

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American attitudes toward leisure time have been ambivalent, to say the least. Throughout our history, the so-called Puritan work ethic has colored our attempts at enjoying time off from work. The development of the vacation as a way to spend the increasing amounts of leisure time Americans enjoyed in the past two centuries and its relationship to attitudes regarding the sanctity of work is one of the major focal points of Cindy S. Aron’s Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States. Aron looks at vacations and how they developed, particularly among the middle class. She discusses a variety of vacation spots, including resorts, chautauquas, tourist sites, and campgrounds. All of these places not only figured into how Americans viewed free time, but also became in many cases, contested areas between classes, ethnic groups, and races. Aron not only examines the relationship between the diverse groups, but she also looks at how vacation sites impacted on the role of women and social interactions.