

## ***Sport and Society in Global France: Nations, Migrations, Corporations (Studies in Modern and Contemporary France)***

Edited by Cathal Kilcline. Published 2019 by Liverpool University Press. Hardcover \$55.19. 348 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78138-289-9

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Timely, insightful, and a powerful rebuttal to the “shut up and dribble” controversy that has recently polarized the global sport world, *Sport and Society in Global France: Nations, Migrations, Corporations* is the latest volume of the book series “Studies in Modern and Contemporary France” edited by Gill Allwood (Nottingham Trent University), Denis M. Provencher (University of Arizona), and Martin O’Shaughnessy (Nottingham Trent University). Written by Cathal Kilcline, *Sport and Society in Global France* takes readers on a 313-page trip down memory lane to revisit some of the pivotal moments in 30 years of the increasingly global sporting landscape in France to underscore the undeniably intertwined interrelationship between sport, mass media, and politics.

Through a detailed and insightful analysis of the media portrayal of high-profile and iconic athletes in France and worldwide (e.g., Marie-José Pérec, Zinedine Zidane, Michael Jordan) and symbolic and traditional sport events (e.g., Tour de France), as well as long-established and cult organizations and institutions (e.g., Paris Saint-Germain F.C.), Kilcline ultimately dissects sport’s complex and multilayered role in contemporary society and the evolution of media in France.

Drawing from a myriad of sport-media sources including film, television, advertising, and news articles in addition to personal memories, Kilcline revives the biggest sporting moments in popular French sports (e.g., European football, basketball, motor sport, cycling) to showcase sport’s significant and implicated role in broader sociocultural developments, political debates, and concerns in France and worldwide largely surrounding national identity and the impact of immigration and globalization, commemoration, and multinational and media corporations, as well as deindustrialization and commercialization. By doing so, the author unveils the many facets of the sporting world, ranging from its potential to serve as a soft diplomatic power to social-change agent; a space where values, character traits, and identities are shaped, and a preserve for nostalgia and tradition.

With the 2024 Olympic Games set to take place in Paris and the growing resentment, fear, and distrust toward long-established institutions, migration, globalization, and mass media, Kilcline’s historical review of the evolution of French’s sporting landscape from the mid-1980s to 2017 through the lens of media sources could not have come at a better time. Illustrating the book with 16 high-quality and color photographs and caricatures (e.g., a head-butt sculpture by Abdel Abdessemed outside of the Centre Pompidou in Paris), Kilcline, an Irish professor

and lecturer in French Studies, has crafted a powerful narrative to make a strong case for sport as not only a mirror and reflection of society but also an effective academic and research tool for analyzing sociocultural trends and transformations.

Divided into eight main parts, totaling 313 pages (without bibliography and index), each book chapter (except the conclusion) highlights a particular French sporting hero, sporting event, key institutions, emblematic clubs, and historic moments, discussed through its media representation in France and worldwide. More specifically, Kilcline dives deeper into the contentious relationship between female French track and field runner Marie-José Pérec and the French media and public in his introductory chapter before setting his sight on France '98 football heroes in Chapter 1, specifically Lilian Thuram and Zinedine Zidane. The second chapter is devoted to France's postcolonial heritage based on the close look at the media coverage of France national football. Next, the Paris-Dakar Rally (and its successor in South America) is at the forefront of attention in Chapter 3. The fear of Americanization is the focus of Chapter 4, discussed in the specific case of French National Basketball Association (NBA) player Tony Parker and its impact on French basketball culture, featuring so-called *rapsketteurs* and *Homo Basketballicus* emulating the two former U.S. American NBA players Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson. The final chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, unpack the notion and impact of nostalgia, tradition, and authenticity in French sport through case studies of the legendary Tour de France, the sport of bicycling, and the highly controversial Qatari investment and ownership in the French cult football club Paris Saint-Germain F.C. (PSG).

Particularly intriguing to me was Svetlana Boyms's suggested definition of nostalgia as a "yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. . . . One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past it could have been" (p. 223). According to Boym, "It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future." On this notion, Kilcline concludes that sport in its very nature is deeply implicated in the construction of national identity, which might explain the observed propensity for nostalgia, authenticity, and tradition in French sport, which Kilcline refers to as "effectively a longing for a lost idea of France as much as for a time past" (p. 223). Even more so, this observation may be equally relevant beyond the French and European borders, providing valuable pointers and explanations for current political developments "across the pond" and elsewhere.

Similarly, Kilcline provides strong evidence for the long-standing yet highly debatable notion of sport as a microcosm of society and thus its potential to serve as a vehicle for social change and a platform for athlete activism. With sport stars now globally and directly connected with their fans through the real-time and instant communication channels of social media and the Internet, a transformative political or sociocultural message can go "viral" and reach millions of individuals within seconds. By the same token, multinational corporations such as the Qatar Investments may benefit from the global appeal of their star athletes, branding them as cultural, sport, or brand ambassadors, ultimately making them a commodity. As such, when it was announced that Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior (commonly known as Neymar Jr.), former FC Barcelona superstar and Brazilian national football team captain and holder of a personal Twitter account with more than 30 million followers, would join PSG for the steep transfer fee of 220 million