Book Review

*Medical and Orthopedic Issues of Active and Athletic Women*,

Rosemary Agostini, in her book Medical and Orthopedic Issues of Active and Athletic Women, has compiled a montage of information covering a gamut of social, psychological and physical/medical/health issues about active or athletically inclined women. As a physically active woman and an educator in Exercise Science and Physical Education, I was very interested in gaining access to a readily usable reference book with the latest collection of research on physically active women. Unfortunately, the book fell short of this goal.

The topics included in this book were so varied and general in some aspects (e.g., gender equity in sport, personal safety and exercise, and sexual harassment in women's sports) and then so specific in others (e.g., pelvic floor muscle dysfunction and physical therapy approaches to patellofemoral stress syndrome) that the appropriate target audience for this book was difficult to discern. I reviewed this book from the standpoint of an educator and researcher and NOT as a Sports Medicine practitioner. Thus I was most interested in considering the book as a reference for Exercise Science, Fitness/Wellness, and/or Physical Education professionals who work with women participants.

The book is organized into four parts: I, Introduction; II, General Considerations; III, Medical and Orthopedic Conditions; and IV, Specific Sports. Contents contained in each part were written in an outline format as 63 “stand alone” chapters. Thus there was much redundancy of information (for example, information on disordered eating was included in no fewer than six chapters). Redundancy serves to reinforce the importance of an issue, however, I began to wonder about the arbitrariness of why certain
topics (such as disordered eating) was not included in even more chapters and why more connections were not made between topics.

Part I contains information in four chapters considered by Dr. Agostini as introductory in nature. Perhaps to a reader less familiar with sociocultural issues of women and sport and the physiology of women, it might provide a foundation for understanding the unique issues surrounding athletic women. However, I found this introduction to be seriously lacking because of its brevity, lack of specific referencing, and over-generalizations. The four introductory chapters on the history of women in sport, sociologic considerations of women in sport, gender equity in sport, and gender-specific physiology are unfortunately the weakest parts of the book and serve to set the stage for some skepticism about the quality of the remainder.

Chapter One is a broad overview of the history of women in sport focusing on specific feats of women athletes. It chronologically lists selected milestone achievements of women with little or no discussion of the historical or social context and significance of the accomplishment. Chapter Two chronologically addresses some of the sociological considerations of women and sport. Although providing an interesting and thought provoking overview of these issues, Judy Mahle Lutter provides no specific references for the information she outlines. She includes a recommended reading list but I would have preferred having specific references available as a way to pursue more depth on the topics. In chapter three, Donna Lopiano provides an outstanding review of the issue of gender equity in College Athletics. However, it is so specific to College programs, NCAA, and Title IX that I do not believe it can be considered appropriate for an overview or “introductory” chapter in a book titled: Medical and Orthopedic Issues of Active and Athletic Women. This chapter seems to me appropriate only for those involved with Collegiate athletes.

Chapter Four, “Gender-Specific Physiology”, gave me the most difficulty. First, because of its distinctive physiological emphasis it seemed out of place with the social-historical chapters preceding it. Second, it outlined women’s physiology in such generalizations