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A Hotly Contested Affair: Hockey in Canada. The National Game in Documents ed. by Andrew C. Holman (review)

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fan-controlled media content in opposition to official social media content created by clubs. Ciaran Ryan analyzes the relationship between Irish fans of Liverpool FC and the emotive fansite “The Anfield Wrap.” Such fan-created content can allow Irish-based fans to interact with fellow global supporters and gain more of a fan’s perspective on a match compared to what is provided by the polished content on official Twitter pages.

These fifteen essays highlight how the interconnected relationship between the media and sport is a vital component in understanding Irish society. This is shown in Anthony P. Mintyre’s excellent analysis of the reaction to James McClean’s “Poppygate,” in Conor Curran’s discussion on the journalism career of footballer Charlie O’Hagan, and Lance Pennitt’s study of George Best’s relationship with the press between 1969 and 1973. The collection grows into a thought-provoking and mold-breaking exploration of the interdependence between sport and media in Ireland.

—Diarmuid Francis Bolger
National Museum of Ireland

Holman, Andrew C., ed. *A Hotly Contested Affair: Hockey in Canada. The National Game in Documents*. Toronto: The Champlain Society and University of Toronto Press, 2020. Pp. 381. Index. \$99.00, hb. \$34.95, pb.

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when Canada’s relationship with hockey was tacitly understood but also academically underexamined. University-employed historians in Canada focused on more traditionally acceptable explorations like statecraft and nation-building. The Canadian public seemed contented with surface-level treatments and hagiographies of the game they loved. The life stories of their hockey heroes that supported the mythologies of the sport seemed to support the old adage from the food industry—you are better off not knowing how the sausage is made. We can be thankful that those simplistic offerings have yielded the stage to the more analytical approaches provided by scholars and thoughtful hockey players such as Ken Dryden. The literary canon has been substantially bolstered with critical investigations of league formation, race, gender, masculinity, ethnicity, and other important dimensions of consideration.

Andrew Holman has been a key contributor to the field, and *A Hotly Contested Affair* casts him in the roles of both editor and writer, as his commentaries contextualize the collection. The ingredient that establishes *A Hotly Contested Affair* as unique is its inclusion of copious primary sources. These materials are not simply included in an appendix but are prominent elements in each chapter. Holman begins each section with a well-crafted synthesis that provides the appropriate background to understand the offering of primary documents that serve as the chapter’s focal point. These sources are not dissected or curated by Holman but offered up whole, trusting the reader to pull what is necessary from the archival materials. Holman does provide informational footnotes to assist the reader further from a knowledge perspective but does not try to analyze the documents or flavor the reader’s interpretation. The primary documents in *A Hotly Contested Affair* are wide-ranging and, as samples, include the West Ottawa District Girls Hockey Rules from 1972; telegraph

bulletins produced by the Canadian Northern Telegraph Company for the Edmonton Hockey Club-versus-Montreal Wanderers Stanley Cup challenge from 1908; and Newsy Lalonde's contract with the Saskatoon Crescents for the 1922–23 season. Not every reader will find each source equally compelling, but there is such a diversity in Holman's collection that there appears to be something for everyone. It is truly an inspired idea for a hockey history book, although this work is so much more than that. Beyond the novel approach is the exquisite execution.

In terms of contents, *A Hotly Contested Affair* explores ten topics, each given its own chapter. These themes are central to Canadians' connection with hockey, both in a historical context and a more modern reimagining of the sport. The chapter titles are fairly self-explanatory: "An Evolutionary Game," "A National Banner," "An Arena for Commerce," "A Cultural Problem," "An Essentially Violent Game," "A Quest for Order," "A Question of Character," "Hockey Talk," "Communicating the Game," "Race and Social Order," "A Gendered Endeavour," "Women's and Girl's Hockey," and "An International Calling Card." It is a comprehensive approach, and, if one could quibble, and often reviewers do, it would be over a lack of exploration into regionalism. This subject receives indirect treatment throughout the collection, however, so it is not an omission in the strictest sense.

It was unclear who is the target audience for *A Hotly Contested Affair*. To be sure, university instructors teaching courses dedicated to exploring hockey would find this new offering quite valuable, perhaps not as a traditional textbook but more as a reader. The generously supplied primary documents could create an enriched learning experience wherein students could take a more active role in assessment and analysis. Whether *A Hotly Contested Affair* is well suited to a more general readership of enthusiasts is more difficult to know. The material is quite accessible thanks to Holman's prose, but hockey fans can be comfortable in the perfunctory (hence, the continued common usage of Original Six) and maybe would not gravitate toward a volume like this one, loaded with archival material—no matter how splendid. That matter, in all likelihood, is the purview of marketers, not reviewers.

On balance, Holman's contribution is significant, and an argument can be made that *A Hotly Contested Affair* is the most important book that examines the relationship between Canada and hockey since Richard Gruneau and David Whitson's oft-cited *Hockey Night in Canada: Sports, Identities and Cultural Politics* published in 1994.

—Craig Greenham
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LaFavor, David C. *Prizefighting and Civilization: A Cultural History of Boxing, Race, and Masculinity in Mexico and Cuba, 1840–1940*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020. Pp. x + 298. Bibliography, images, index, notes. \$75.00, hb. \$75.00 eb.

In *Prizefighting and Civilization*, David LaFavor explains how boxing not only became legalized and legitimized but eventually woven into the fabric of a national culture in Cuba and Mexico during their transition from colonialism to decolonization. This riff