



The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football: Sexism and the Culture of Sport

Mariah Burton Nelson

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Women's freedom and their freedom of movement have always advanced in tandem; early in this century, a suffragette's most potent symbol was her bicycle. Sports are central to American culture and the socialization of children, yet the "manly" sports world rarely offers women a level playing field. Despite laws to the contrary, all-male teams routinely garner a vastly disproportionate share of college athletic budgets; despite two decades of "sensitivity," men's sports are still a fertile breeding ground for Neanderthal attitudes about women; and despite increased awareness of sexual harassment, affairs between male coaches and underage female players are commonplace and gang rape of college women by male athletes has almost become a cliché. As women have become increasingly involved in sports, those "manly" American sports - football, basketball, hockey - have seen an enormous explosion in popularity, at least partly because they are seen as an inviolably male domain. Many women are finding that participation in sports can make them healthier, happier, more confident in their own abilities, more at home in their own skins, better able to compete with men in the workplace. Is this what men are fleeing when they watch football? Astute, provocative, and full of original research, Mariah Burton Nelson's book paves the way for a new awareness of the American culture of sports and its pervasive effects on both women and men.

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