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BOOK REVIEW

Title: SPORTS WOMEN

Editor: M. J. Adrian

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This is the 24th volume in a series on Medicine and Sports Science. The orientation is very much towards the situation in the United States from whence come the authors of eight of the eleven chapters with five of these coming from the University of Illinois as does the volume editor.

The first chapter looks at the effect of physical activity on the skeleton and is perhaps the most relevant in the volume. It is unfortunate that with such a lot of data available on the subject at present, there is a lack of up-to-date references, with the author using only one from 1985 and one from 1986, all others being prior to these dates. Chapter Two is about the female breast and, though interesting, is perhaps unnecessary, as it does not actually give rise to many problems in female sports participants. The following chapter on acupuncture is a little misplaced in this book, it would seem to be by chance that seventeen of eighteen subjects were female and hence its appearance in this volume. A study was performed with the aim of assessing whether acupuncture reduced fatigue but this did not seem to be the case and the one male subject responded in the same way as the females. The volume editor then contributes a chapter on different physical characteristics in young female basketball and cross-country runners, although it is pointed out that the general design and implications of the study could be expanded to cover other sports. There would appear to be differences between the two groups but whether these are the result of participation within the sport or have been the reasons for direction to the particular sport is uncertain. Interestingly, it was questioned whether less fit girls might gravitate towards cross-country whilst fitter ones participated in basketball which would not be reflected in these sports in Great Britain. A chapter on the effect of visual impairment on physical activity follows, which, although in descriptive terms relates to females, could apply equally well to males and the references used to supply the information do not appear to have been sex specific. Two references are quoted which do not appear in the list following the chapter. The longest chapter then follows and represents a British contribution on psychological research and the sportswoman. This is a very comprehensive chapter going into considerable depth and would be a useful reference source for anyone interested in the subject. One hundred and six references quoted are arranged in a different system (as is the case in the final chapter) to the other chapters in the book. Women in leisure activities in ancient Greece and Rome follows and might more suitably have been placed at the beginning. This makes interesting reading, particularly to learn that Greek women suffered the death penalty if they spectated at the exclusively male Olympic Games (presumably this was because they should have been at home doing housewifely things!). A section on sociological aspects follows. This introduces the concept of 'Title IX' which covers federal legislation which prohibits sex discrimination in athletes in the United States. A small personal study forms the basis of this section and with somewhat inconclusive results. The changing role of sport among intercollegiate female athletes follows, again relating to a personal study the main outcome of which seems to be that interest in sport declines as the individuals move through college. Following this there is a further personal study exploring gender differences in children's motor skills. The study was based on a questionnaire with only a 56% return rate and there were certain features throwing doubt on this being a representative sample. Two large tables of correlation coefficients add nothing. The final chapter deals with legal aspects mainly covering cases that have occurred in the United States and reporting various court cases.

I was disappointed in this volume with the standard being far below that of three earlier volumes that I have seen in the series. It is over-priced for the British market and has little to recommend it, except, perhaps, as an occasional reference book in a library when three or four of the chapters might prove to be of use. The index is adequate but there are a few typing errors.

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