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BOOK REVIEW

Digital Media Sport: Technology, Power and Culture in the Network Society, edited by Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, 2013, New York, Routledge, ISBN 978-0-415-51751-5, 274 pp., $156.00/£85.00 (hard-back).

Brett Hutchins and David Rowe continue to add invaluable insights to the media sport canon with their latest engaging co-edited collection on *Digital Media Sport*. The book provides a salient exploration of different televisual, mobile and digital technologies shaping sport *as media*, particularly when understood in relation to the socio-cultural online practices, communities and engagements that are also taking place. As such, their work affords an illuminating discussion of the interweaving of contemporary sports, audiences, commerce and socio-technological relationships.

Hutchins and Rowe infer that *Digital Media Sport* was designed to complement their previous co-authored book, *Sport Beyond Television*, with this latest iteration producing a more thematic rather than transnational focus. This is both a strength and weakness of the book. On the one hand, more thematic depth is afforded through focused analyses of the complicated evolution of television, broadcasting rights and sport journalism, as well as emerging digital sport media forms spanning across twitter, blogs, gaming, mobile devices, fantasy sports and contested online communities. However, on the other hand, the works often exclusively focus on major (male) sports and examples from the United States and Britain, such as baseball, football (soccer) and basketball. While examples are also drawn from Australia, Belgium and China (albeit as a discussion of the Beijing

Olympics), this predominantly western orientation could have also benefited from more specific regional case studies and/or broader transnational insights as well. Nevertheless, despite this criticism, the book provides a timely examination of contemporary digital sport practices, infused with a rich variety of disciplinary and theoretical approaches from many well-respected authors.

In terms of organisation, the book has three subsections, premised on 'evolving technologies, platforms and markets', 'users, audiences and identities' and 'content ecologies, social software and games'. A strength of the first section is avoiding the temptation to simply ignore broadcast media. Rather, the contributing authors advocate that media and sport organisations often produce complementary digital content through notable chapters on diverse mobile media (Gerard Goggin), Major League Baseball's digital coverage (Ethan Tussey) and unauthorised online football streaming (Andrew Kirton and Matthew David). The second section considers the alleged 'transformative' powers of audiences as 'produsers' who construct online identities around sport. Problematically, many of these communities often reaffirm sexist values and construct divisive spaces, such as ostracising female football fans (Deirdre Hynes and Ann-Marie Cook), or through their explicit sexualisation of female athletes via youtube (David Leonard). In contrast, Andy Ruddock's chapter reveals the online myth-making capabilities for fans aligned with the Australian football franchise, *Melbourne Heart*. Finally, the digital and social transformations that arise are also examined with, for example, social media operating as a networking and instructional resource within

lifestyle sports (Paul Gilchrist and Belinda Wheaton) while imposing transformative challenges to sports journalism (Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes).

Overall, *Digital Media Sport* is an enjoyable read and relatively accessible for scholars and students, offering an informative text that traces some of the key contemporary digital sport transformations from diverse theoretical perspectives. This work could usefully complement screened/digital examples and offers an invaluable resource for contemporary sport, media and internet researchers.

Reference:

Hutchins, Brett, and Rowe, David, 2013, *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport*. Routledge, New York.

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