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**Washburn, Patrick S., and Chris Lamb. *Sports Journalism: A History of Fame, Glory, and Technology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 288 pp. \$30.00 paperback.** Reviewed by Daxton “Chip” Stewart, Texas Christian University (d.stewart@tcu.edu)

The authors of *Sports Journalism: A History of Fame, Glory, and Technology* set out with the ambitious task of writing “the most thorough account yet produced” of sports journalism in the United States, dating back to 1733. It is a task they accomplish thoroughly until the dawn of the twentieth century, when modern technology and business of sports, as well as cultural and societal changes, make a comprehensive telling daunting.

One of the confounding things about sports journalism is that, at least for the past century, sports journalism doesn’t know what it is. To be certain, there is plenty of journalism being done about and around sports, with storytelling about the games and the people who play them, as well as the issues surrounding sports, rooted in reporting and publishing the truth. But the sports journalism business is also about hype and entertainment, manufactured spectacle to sell newspapers and magazines and advertisements, and filling up prime spots on television and radio. It’s questionable how much ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*, live broadcasts of games, or even most programming on ESPN, are acts of journalism, as opposed to publicity.

Authors Patrick S. Washburn and Chris Lamb are accomplished historians and scholars, both with backgrounds in sports journalism. Their love for the games and the craft of sports journalism is obvious throughout, though as they move into the twenty-first century, their worries about a rapidly changing field and yearning for the sports journalism of the past become evident as well.

The purpose of the book, as they note, is to look at the changes of sports journalism over time and explore why they occurred. Like most journalism history, it’s a blend of technology and business concerns, driven by the great deeds of great men (and in sports, as this book records, it is almost entirely

men, at least until the very recent past). One could teach journalism and the march of technology—from the colonial press to the penny press to the telegraph and wire services, to photography and radio and television and ultimately the digital age—following the chronology Washburn and Lamb use as they detail how sports journalism grew and changed alongside American journalism itself.

The first two chapters of the book are, to put it simply, superb. As a scholar who, like the authors, is a former sportswriter and fan of the games, I was enthralled by learning about the roots of American sports journalism, dating to colonial press accounts of the popular sports of the time in an age of Puritanism—blood sports such as cock-fighting, bear-baiting, and hunting, as well as horse racing and boxing. The rise of sports journalism in the nineteenth century is revealed through the stories of John Stuart Skinner (*American Turf Register* and *Sporting Magazine*) and William T. Porter (*Spirit of the Times*) becoming publishing successes, while daily newspaper publishers such as James Gordon Bennett Sr. saw the economic advantages of sports coverage in the *New York Herald*.

As they note, this is a history of the institution of sports journalism, rather than the craft of it, which is presumably why you won’t find the storytelling exploits of sportswriters like Ernest Hemingway and Hunter S. Thompson anywhere. Instead, the book focuses on game-changers such as Henry Chadwick, who pioneered baseball journalism while promoting the game itself; bombastic storyteller and radio voice Grantland Rice and the “Gee Whiz” brand of sportswriter; and Rooney Arledge, who brought sports around the world to television audiences, ushering in the modern broadcast era.

In the twentieth century, American sports—and the journalists who covered them—became a more

diverse venture. The authors tackle this with a chapter on coverage of race issues by focusing on the emergence of athletes such as Jack Johnson, Jesse Owens, and Jackie Robinson, and how the press covered them, though neither with any particular attention to minority journalists, nor to publications, radio, and television that targeted underrepresented groups. The contrary is true in the chapter on women journalists of the modern broadcast age, especially in the era of ESPN and cable sports programming. The authors deliver interesting stories of pioneers such as Melissa Ludtke, who sued to gain access to major league baseball locker rooms, as well as the pernicious sexual harassment they faced from athletes and leagues, though coverage of women's sports is largely absent.

The final chapter covers the digital age, with the rise of sports fan bloggers and the decline of traditional sports journalism as an institution. The

authors seem to be resigned to the fact that while sports are omnipresent in modern American society, intertwined with politics and entertainment, the institution of American sports journalism that had developed over the previous two and a half centuries has found itself endangered. It may be too soon to write up a history of the digital sports journalism in the social media and podcasting age, but Washburn and Lamb have queued up the next scholarly effort by laying the groundwork for future efforts at comprehensive sports journalism history.

As a professor, I thought the book would be suitable for a course such as the Contemporary Issues in Sports Media that I teach, though it would be useful in any sports journalism curriculum looking to understand what sports journalism has been and how we got to where we are. The writing is accessible and engaging throughout, giving an enjoyable read to any fans of sports or journalism history.