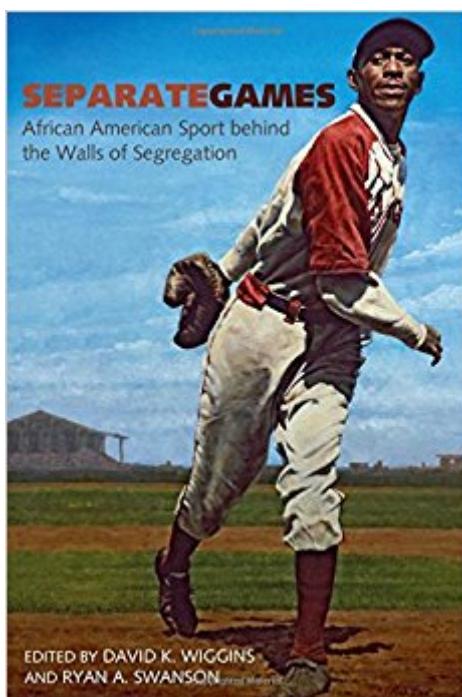


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Separate Games: African American Sport Behind The Walls Of Segregation (Sport, Culture, And Society)



Synopsis

Winner of the 2017 NASSH Book Award for best edited collection. The hardening of racial lines during the first half of the twentieth century eliminated almost all African Americans from white organized sports, forcing black athletes to form their own teams, organizations, and events. This separate sporting culture, explored in the twelve essays included here, comprised much more than athletic competition; these “separate games” provided examples of black enterprise and black self-help and showed the importance of agency and the quest for racial uplift in a country fraught with racialist thinking and discrimination. The significance of this sporting culture is vividly showcased in the stories of the Cuban Giants baseball team, basketball’s New York Renaissance Five, the Tennessee State Tigerbelles track-and-field team, black college football’s Turkey Bowl Classic, car racing’s Gold and Glory Sweepstakes, Negro League Baseball’s East-West All-Star game, and many more. These teams, organizations, and events made up a vibrant national sporting complex that remained in existence until the integration of sports beginning in the late 1940s. Separate Games explores the fascinating ways sports helped bind the black community and illuminate race pride, business acumen, and organizational abilities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wiggins (George Mason Univ.) and Swanson (Univ. of New Mexico) have edited a 12-essay volume, written by recognized experts, about the segregated era in African American

sports. The sections “Teams” and “Events” are probably too detailed, but the section on segregated black organizations is quite illuminating. The book argues that “separate games” were more than athletic competition, exemplifying black entrepreneurship and agency in a divided racist society. Black sportsmen and entrepreneurs tried to demonstrate to largely disinterested white sportsmen their athletes’ high skill levels. Separate sports programs, such as the Negro baseball leagues and historically black college and university conferences paralleled the organized white sports world, exemplifying “black self-help and organizational skills while at once engendering a sense of racial and community pride.” The book could be read in conjunction with the more biographical “Before Jackie Robinson: The Transcendent Role of Black Sporting Pioneers” (2017), edited by Gerald R. Gems. In addition to illustrations, the work under review includes endnotes.

S. A. Riess, Northeastern Illinois University, Choice, July 2017 Summing Up: Recommended. All readers.

David K. Wiggins is a professor in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism and co-director of the Center for the Study of Sport and Leisure in Society at George Mason University. He is the author or editor of many books on sport, race, and American culture. Ryan A. Swanson is assistant professor of history in the Honors College at the University of New Mexico. He is the author of *When Baseball Went White: Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Dreams of a National Pastime*.

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