



The Unlevel Playing Field: A Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport (Sport and Society)

David K. Wiggins, Patrick B. Miller

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This extraordinarily rich compendium of primary sources charts the significant, intertwining history of African Americans and sport. "The Unlevel Playing Field" contains more than one hundred documents - ranging chronologically from a challenge issued by prizefighter Tom Molineaux in the "London Times" in 1810, to a forward-looking interview with Harry Edwards in 2000. Introductions and head-notes provided by David K. Wiggins and Patrick B. Miller place each document in context, shaping an unrivaled narrative. Readers will find dozens of accounts taken from newspapers (both black and white), periodicals, and autobiographies, by literary and sports figures, activists, historians, and others. Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright, A. S. "Doc" Young, Eldredge Cleaver, Nikki Giovanni, John Edgar Wideman, bell hooks, James Baldwin, Roy Wilkins, Henry Louis Gates, and Gerald Early are included here. Tracing the participation of blacks in American sport from the days of slavery, "The Unlevel Playing Field" touches on nearly every major sport and covers the full sweep of America's past. The documents include discussions of the color line in organized baseball during the Jim Crow era and athletics in the American army, as well as portraits of turn-of-the-century figures, like the champion sprint cyclist Marshall "Major" Taylor and boxers George Dixon and Jack Johnson. Other selections tackle the National Tennis Association championship, high school basketball, and debates over participation of black athletes in the 1968 Olympics, and the place of African American women in sport. Countless pioneering and modern-day African American athletes are spotlighted here, from Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, and Althea Gibson, to Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Venus and Serena Williams. A thorough and informative bibliographical essay by Wiggins and Miller concludes the volume.

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