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Native Hoops: The Rise of American Indian Basketball, 1895–1970. By Wade Davies. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2020. 385 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper and electronic.

Contrary to common knowledge, Indigenous peoples in general, and American Indians in particular, have long and rich histories of sport and game in their societies. Among other ways, sports were a means to settle disputes, honor deities, educate the young, and simply to strengthen social bonds. Sports in Indian country is arguably understudied, but offers another lens for understanding the cultural, educational, and political complexities of the North American continent's bedrock nations. The existing literature shows that sports simultaneously has been used as a tool of colonization and assimilation and as a way for individuals and communities to cope with those processes. Resistance and resilience always have been built into those coping strategies as Native people have continually adapted to their changing world, even indigenizing colonial institutions to suit their needs.

In the realm of sports, perhaps no team sport exemplifies these dichotomies more than basketball, as Wade Davies shows in his most recent book. When we think of assimilation, we rightly think of boarding schools, especially Carlisle. And, when we think of sports at boarding schools, initially Jim Thorpe, dubbed the twentieth century's greatest athlete and whose athletic career began at Carlisle, may come to mind. Almost everyone knows who Jim Thorpe is, but far fewer know Thorpe's complicated history, or how Carlisle incorporated sports into its assimilating mission, or the impact Carlisle's sporting traditions would have on modern sports. Observers have pointed out, for example, that football as we know it today is a result of the ways the Carlisle Indians (the actual team name) adapted the game in order to develop strategies for winning in the face of the unfair advantages of some of their opponents such as Yale and Harvard universities and the Army's football team. The indigenization of football has thus had a permanent, if little known, impact on the modern game.

Davies's deep archival research results in an exhaustively detailed historical narrative to show how basketball caught fire in Indian country throughout the twentieth century as a direct result of the Indian schools. While football was exploding in popularity in the United States, the recently invented sport of basketball (1891) was being adopted in late-nineteenth-century boarding schools, likely first with Carlisle, but perhaps most notably with the famous Fort Shaw Indian School girls basketball team, best known for having performed a series of exhibition games in 1904 at the St. Louis World's Fair. Davies shows how Indians made basketball their own, becoming what we know today as Indian basketball, or "rez ball." While basketball may have made its first appearance at Carlisle, it is Haskell, in Kansas, that the author sees as the "cradle" of Indian basketball (30).

The book takes us on a journey that not only chronologizes the timeline, but also contextualizes the sport within the much longer history of precolonial Indian game and sport, as Gregory Cajete wrote about in his 2005 book *Spirit of the Game: An Indigenous Wellspring*. For example, in a chapter titled "Indian Basketball," Davies helps us to understand that the style of "Indian basketball" (the term was first coined in the early 1940s), which he describes as "characterized by sharp, accurate passing,

pronounced agility off the ball and on the dribble, ambitious, long-range shooting, well-coordinated teamwork, high endurance, and above all foot speed” (126), is rooted in ancient and widespread traditions of Indigenous running and team ball sports like lacrosse, stickball, shinney, and others integral to tribal culture, even creation stories.

Of particular interest is “Barnstormers,” a chapter that documents the entrance of Indians into professional-level basketball. A precursor to the National Basketball Association and lasting roughly between the 1920s and 1940s, barnstorming was a type of league play in rural areas where Indians could more easily be recruited and make a living as professional athletes, albeit a scrappy one, while seeing the country by car. Barnstorming basketball was notoriously gimmicky, if not outright camp, but it was also the home of the short-lived basketball career of Jim Thorpe and created a space for all-Indian teams such as the World Famous Indians (WFI). WFI emerged from the failed Oorang Indians football team; one of this book’s contributions is an epilogue to the story of this little-known episode of Indian basketball and Jim Thorpe’s life.

Native Hoops is sports history more than a criticism, a book in the vein, for instance, of Isaiah Walker’s *Waves of Resistance: Surfing and History in Twentieth Century Hawaii*. As Walker’s study illustrates, critical sports texts predominantly attend to the sociopolitical aspects of sports and how sports is mediated by social and political power. While this is an aspect of Davies’s book, in that he does for example examine gender issues in Indian basketball showing how broader social norms infiltrated the ways female athletes were treated in particular eras, ultimately Davies’s project is not to examine the relationship of basketball to assertions of sovereignty or political resistance as Walker has framed Hawaiian surfing. Stacey Sewell argues, however, that basketball is a site where American Indians exercise agency in assimilationist institutions (2013). Haudenosaunee people engage lacrosse in clear assertions of political sovereignty, as was true when the Onondaga hosted the Federation of International Lacrosse championships in 2015 and when the Iroquois Nationals refused to travel to Great Britain for the championships after the country announced that Iroquois passports would not be honored. One wonders what it might look like if we viewed adopted sports like basketball through the lens of cultural sovereignty.

The author’s conclusion does question larger implications of basketball in Indian country: he wonders if the “sport’s rise to athletic centrality” (275) has contributed to the decline of traditional sports and games, like those that connected people directly to their creation stories, lacrosse being the best example. Not willing to throw the baby out with the bathwater, though, he brings it back around to highlight reservation communities’ intense love of the game and the overall positive cultural impacts basketball has on those communities, as exemplified by role models like Umatilla tribal member Shoni Shimmel.

Peppered with historic photos drawn from the archives *Native Hoops* is a hefty read. Ultimately, this book is an important contribution to the literature on Indigenous sports, with the potential to become the foremost authority on Indian basketball. And it is certain to ignite excitement in diehard Indian basketball fans.

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