Sports, Spirituality and Religion: Books of Interest for 2017

Does God Care WhoWins?
by Robert Schindler
The Sports Outreach Group - August, 2017

“If you say, ‘No,’ why no? Are our games not important enough in light of other world issues? This is the common reason given. It trivializes sports and leaves us wondering what else isn’t important enough in our lives to garner God’s concern.

If you say ‘yes,’ why yes? Does God favor a particular team over another and if so, why? This answer tends to trivialize God and leaves us encouraging different values than those God declares matter to him in the gospel.

Does God Care Who Wins? challenges each of these common answers and discuss their implications while encouraging more dialogue on the question. In it, Bob Schindler explores what he sees as the answer that not only honors God but also brings meaning and passion to sports.

While Does God Care Who Wins? is more about God than sports, it is not a theoretical approach to the question. Rather, the book comes from a very practical perspective — one that honestly addresses athletes, coaches, and parents and the real questions we all ask around this question. Bob Schindler is the Director of Cede Partners, an initiative of Cede Sports, where he has served since 2003.”

Sport, Culture and Society: An introduction (3rd Edition)
by Grant Jarvie
Routledge - July, 2017

“What can sport do to produce social change in our world today? It is impossible to fully understand contemporary society and culture without acknowledging the importance of sport. Sport is part of our social and cultural fabric, possessing a commercial power that makes it a potent force in the world, for good and for bad. It has helped to start wars and promote international reconciliation, and governments around the world commit public resources to sport.

Sport matters, but how should you make sense of what is going on in the world of sport today?

In a fully revised, updated and expanded third edition, this critical, challenging and comprehensive textbook introduces the study of sport, culture and society. International in scope, it challenges us to reactivate an audacious spirit of activism through sport. Full of contemporary examples, it places sport at the heart of the analysis and introduces the reader to every core topic and emerging area in the study of sport and society. The book includes a chapter on Sport, Religion and Spirituality.”

The Eternal Present of Sport: Rethinking Sport and Religion
by Daniel A. Grano
Temple University Press - June, 2017

“In his persuasive study The Eternal Present of Sport, Daniel Grano rethinks the sport-religion relationship by positioning sport as a source of theological trouble. Focusing on bodies, time, movement, and memory, he demonstrates how negative theology can be practically and theoretically useful as a critique of elite televised sport.

Grano asserts that it is precisely through sport’s highest religious ideals that controversies are taking shape and constituting points of political and social rupture. He examines issues of transcendence,
“legacy”—e.g., “greatest ever,” or “all-time”—and “witnessing” through instant replay, which undermine institutional authority. Grano also reflects on elite athletes representing especially powerful embodiments of religious and social conflict, including around issues related to gender, sexuality, ability doping, traumatic brain injury, and institutional greed.

Elite sport is in a period of profound crisis. It is through the ideals Grano analyzes that we can imagine a radically alternative future for elite sport.”

**Heart of a Competitor Playbook: Daily Devotions for a Winning Attitude**
by Fellowship of Christian Athletes - May, 2017

“With their passion for sports, athletes and coaches often view life through a competitive lens. Competitors train, compete, and give their all in order to succeed in their sport. Yet to be the best God has created them to be, competitors must also train their heart. This pocket-sized devotional offers athletes and coaches thirty-one powerful devotions written by competitors, for competitors. They’ll gain insight into handling daily challenges and keeping God at the center, not only in their athletics but in every other area of life.”

**Constant Challenge: Sports and American Judaism**
by Jeffrey S. Gurock
The Toby Press, LLC - January, 2017

For American Jewish historian Jeffrey S. Gurock, the sports metaphor highlights the challenges that Jewish life has faced in modern American society. Although athletics were once seen as the incursion of a foreign cultural phenomenon into Jewish life, attitudes have shifted in recent generations. What was once branded as an unproductive questionable activity has entered into the American Jewish experience, and has captured the allegiance of Jews on the track, gridiron, diamond, and court. Constant Challenge: Sports and American Judaism brings together nine intriguing essays that explore the different approaches to athletic activities within Jewish life. Together, this anthology identifies and discusses how Jewish communities cope with these challenges, navigating the delicate balance between religious identification and American sports culture. Jeffrey S. Gurock is the Libby M. Klaperman professor of American Jewish history at Yeshiva University.

**FORTHCOMING**

**The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies**
Routledge - October, 2017
by Ian Brittain and Aaron Beacom (Eds.)

“This handbook provides a critical assessment of contemporary issues that define the contours of the Paralympic Movement generally and the Paralympic Games more specifically. It addresses conceptualizations of disability sport, explores the structure of the Paralympic Movement and considers key political strategic and governance issues which have shaped its development.

The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies is written by a range of international authors, a number of whom are senior strategists as well as academics, and explores legacy themes through case studies of recent Paralympic games. Written in the wake of the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, it provides an assessment of contemporary challenges faced by the International Paralympic Committee and other key stakeholders in the Paralympic Movement.
Its critical assessment of approaches to branding, classification, social inclusion and technological advances makes this handbook a valuable resource for undergraduate study across a range of sport and disability related programs, as well as a point of reference for researchers and policy makers.”

*Global Perspectives on Sports and Christianity*
by Afe Adogame, Nick J. Watson and Andrew Parker (Eds.)
Routledge - November, 2017

“While the relationship between sport and religion is deeply rooted in history, it continues to play a profound role in shaping modern-day societies. This edited collection provides an inter-disciplinary exploration of this relationship from a global perspective, making a major contribution to the religious, social scientific and theological study of sport.

It discusses the dialectical interplay between sport and Christianity across diverse cultures, extending beyond a Western perspective to include studies from Africa, South America and Asia, as well as Europe, the UK and the US.”

*Rethinking Sports and Integration: Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports*
by Sine Agergaard
Routledge – December, 2017

“Based on empirical research, this book offers a critical cultural analysis of the idea that sport can promote the integration of migrants and their descendants. It examines the origins of this idea, the concept of integration, perceptions about target groups, and analyses the methods, results and organization of sport-based integration programs. The book also considers the prevalent nationalist (neo-assimilationist) view of integration and uniformity in immigrant groups in the context of migration studies focused on super-diversity, and explores the various ways in which transnational connections influence consumption of, and participation and representation in, sport within the community.”

Descriptions used in this bibliography are adapted from Amazon Books. In general, titles of a biographical nature are not included in these resources.

To make a recommendation for additions to this list, contact christopher.janosik@villanova.edu.