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*Fit for America: Major John L. Griffith and the Quest for
Athletics and Fitness* by Matthew Lindaman (review)

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(Review)

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(hyperandrogenism). The research on hyperandrogenism, she asserts, “risks pathologizing yet another aspect of female physiology and legitimizing what may prove to be unnecessary medical interventions” (119). Moreover, the campaign to detect hyperandrogenism has serious consequences for women athletes from non-Western countries. In sum, Lenskyj observes, “suspicions of doping and complaints about athletes who are not ‘real women’ routinely set into motion a series of procedures based on the presumption of guilt—all clear violations of human rights” (157).

In *Inside the Olympics Industry: Power, Politics, and Activism*, Lenskyj suggested that the Olympic industry should be dismantled. The current volume reaches a similarly stark conclusion about the CAS, namely, reforms are inadequate and radical solutions are necessary. The incisive analysis in this volume, attributable to Lenskyj’s research and the insights she has gained over the course of a long career studying power and sports, make *Gender, Athletes’ Rights, and the Court of Arbitration for Sport* unfailingly thought provoking.

—Evan C. Rothera

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Lindaman, Matthew. *Fit for America: Major John L. Griffith and the Quest for Athletics and Fitness*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018. Pp. 304. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95, pb.

The historical canon of college sports lacks scholarship on the insight and contributions of athletic administrators, while it has a wealth of biographies on players and coaches: for example, John Carroll’s *Red Grange and the Rise of Modern Football* (1999) and Julie Des Jardins’s *Walter Camp: Football and the Modern Man* (2015). Yet there has been little exploration of those officials who served an integral part of the growth of intercollegiate competition. Historian Matthew Lindaman’s *Fit for America*, a book that explores the life of Major John L. Griffith, is a key contributor to the rise of college athletics and physical education in the first half of the twentieth century.

Major Griffith had a decorated career spanning forty years. He was a coach at Drake University, where he founded the Drake Relays Carnival (later the Drake Relays), the Midwest’s largest track and field event. He, along with the help of Amos Alonzo Stagg (University of Chicago), founded the first national championship event (track and field) sponsored by the NCAA in 1921. Griffith was also the first commissioner of the Western Athletic Conference (which later became the Big Ten Conference) from 1922 to 1944, while also serving as president of the NCAA from 1933 to 1937. One of Griffith’s major contributions was his creation of the *Athletic Journal*, for which he served as editor. Lindaman argues this publication not only helped professionalize the role of coaches and administrators in athletics, but it also brought product endorsement to the forefront. Through the journal, Griffith promoted coaches as the source of honor, fair play, loyalty to their school, allegiance to country, and self-sacrifice. The periodical also created networks among the coaching ranks, as coaches like Knute Rockne, Walter Camp, Glenn “Pop” Warner, and Forest “Phog” Allen wrote articles on tactical approaches and strategies. Such

efforts professionalized the vocation and helped elevate the coaches to expert status across the country, a result Lindaman convincingly attributes to Griffith.

In *Fit for America*, the reader will see many parallels between intercollegiate competition of the early 1900s with that of college sports today. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, college coaches could not scout or contact potential student-athletes nor offer athletic scholarships to prospective students. As a result, alumni had to appeal to the needs of great talent. In doing so, many schools, like the University of Michigan, sought to keep pace with other educational institutions. The early 1900s serve as a precursor to today's "arms race" in college athletics. Interesting is also Griffith's notion that collegians were "wasting their time playing professional football when they should be focusing on their careers" (91). It was Griffith's goal to make sure students were not solely focused on athletic pursuits as interests in professional football began to expand during this period.

While there was much interest in growing football professionally, many schools had to deal with criticisms around the financial exploitation of college athletes. Interestingly, many of the pressing concerns in the twenty-first century (recruiting violations, illegal payments to players, gambling, unprofessional behavior, and eligibility concerns) were present in the early 1920s. For example, in 1925 schools like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton took a "sport-for-sport's-sake approach" (104). In many cases, a school's academic reputation was dwarfed by the athletic prowess it garnered. Thus, many institutions of higher education made concerted efforts to focus on making sure their respective academic missions were not lost to athletics.

To develop Griffith's biography, Lindaman relies on a wealth of primary sources. Along with personal writings, newspaper articles, speeches, journal articles, and an array of selections from the *Athletic Journal*, the author utilizes the archives of numerous schools that were part of the Western Athletic Conference/Big Ten, including Drake University, The Ohio State University, and University of Chicago. Lindaman also uses convention proceedings and minutes (such as the Annual Convention of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association and Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives). These particular resources help give breadth to Major Griffith's life.

Fit for America is a book enthusiasts and students of sport history should explore. Matthew Lindaman perfectly examines Major John L. Griffith's life as he expanded the field of physical education and intercollegiate athletics. More importantly, the book adds to the discourse on how sports shaped institutions of higher education across the nation during the first half of the twentieth century.

—Robert A. Bennett III
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Lisle, Benjamin. *Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 321. Notes, index, 76 illustrations. \$34.95, hb. \$25.98, eb.

After the pioneering works by Sullivan and Zimbalist in the 1980s, issues of stadium subsidizing and sport-related downtown redevelopment have featured in mainstream publications