

Body Language: Writers on Sport

Gerald Early

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While the more eloquent of sports writing has traditionally centered on baseball, this second collection of essays in an ongoing series of forums covers many arenas of physical endeavor with consistently fine, and occasionally exemplary, prose.

For Vijay Seshadri, an immigrant from India, the assimilation into American culture is rendered less problematic by a near-obsessive devotion to right-fielder Roberto Clemente, himself an immigrant. In "A Higher Plane" Wayne Fields observes the evolution of basketball, from a largely horizontal pastime for earthbound white players to a more vertical display of astounding athleticism, more often than not practiced by talented black athletes. Loc Wacquant examines the multitude of sacrifices made by prizefighters in training, whether dietary or sexual, and Teri Bostian struggles with the prickly question of whether a gifted girl kickball player should go easy on the boy she likes in "The Natural."

Picking the best entry here isn't easy, but David Foster Wallace's evocative recollection of his own fleeting teen-age tennis stardom is masterfully juxtaposed with the unearthly incidence of tornado-force winds which periodically swept across his Southern Illinois hometown. Other contributors include Jonis Agee and Gerald Early himself.

PETER ROBERTSON (May / June 1998)

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