FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Motion: American Sports Poems
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Given the American obsession with sports, it is hardly surprising that many American poets should have turned their attention that way. In this generous gathering of sports poems, the editor offers something for just about everyone, with nearly thirty sports represented and nearly as wide a variety of styles and perspectives. Although the organization-alphabetical by author-makes for a somewhat random feel, Blaustein argues in his introduction that "the idea of transcendence" is what holds sports, poetry, and life together, and many of these poems do yearn for, or point toward, such transcendence in the moment of athletic accomplishment.

Baseball and basketball are the most common subjects, with boxing, fishing, football, and jogging trailing behind. If Marianne Moore's slightly bewildered paean to the '50s Yankees seems a bit dated, there is Paul Hoover's even more skeptical "Baseball": "those uniforms, so quasi-pseudo-semi-demi-military in fashion," and if readers tire of the spectator's point of view they can turn to R. T. Smith and Alan Soldofsky, who reminisce on the ball games of their youth. Those who are weary of the whole baseball-as-life business can read poems on surfing or karate, curling or bowling, skiing or skateboarding. In fact, many of the most intriguing poems here deal with such marginal, participatory activities rather than with the mass spectator sports.

In his edgy, speculative foreword, novelist John Edgar Wideman argues: "If religion is the opiate of the people, sport today is the people's crack. Cheap, hot, addictive, immediate, sport provides a reductive mirror for life." But at its best, these poems suggest, sport-like poetry-offers experience that is not merely reduced but also heightened and clarified, complete within itself even though not a complete representation of life.

The best of these poems certainly yield pleasures and meditations less corrupting than crack; they render the experience of sports as absorbing, difficult, dramatic, and rewarding. Against the endless hyperbole and chatter of the commodified sports that clog the media, these poems are refreshingly brisk, clear, sharp, and resonant.

Jeff Gundy