FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ SOCIAL SCIENCES

Strong Women Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport

Pat Griffin
Human Kinetics (Feb 4, 1998)
Unknown $19.95 (264pp)
978-0-88011-729-6

The eerie silence of a tenuous ‘don’t tell’ atmosphere now prevails in collegiate locker rooms and on professional playing fields across the United States Pat Griffin breaks this silence. Her controversial new book is authoritative, even-handed and courageous; Griffin writes not only as a thoughtful observer, but as a longtime participant.

Griffin begins by recounting her own struggles and triumphs as a lesbian athlete and coach, the double life she led for so many years, dating the male wrestling coach in order to give everyone the ‘right impression,’ and the supportive community of lesbian athletes she eventually found. Within a solid intellectual framework, Griffin revisits stories that readers will recognize from the popular press. Her study gains additional strength from excerpted interviews with dozens of lesbian coaches and players. Her purpose lies in “challenging the hypocrisy of championing equality for women’s sports yet tolerating discrimination and prejudice against lesbian athletes and coaches.” The book is strongest when she deals with the effects of homophobia on women athletes (“Life in the Shadow of the Lesbian Boogeywoman”), the impact of evangelical Christian sport ministries, and the strategies lesbian coaches and athletes deploy in order to protect and/or assert their identities. The photos she includes bear witness to the past and still-very-present power of heterosexism over women in sports. But alongside these unhappy testimonials one finds the energetic faces and glowing bodies of lesbian athletes.

Strong Women, Deep Closets would be an excellent selection for women’s studies courses, and is a valuable tool for responsible coaches, athletic directors, and concerned parents. While Griffin’s book may be less satisfying to those who already are well versed in feminist theory and gay history, it provides the resources to meet the challenge she poses to demystify the “lesbian bogeyman,” for the sake of all present and future sportswomen, gay, straight, and bisexual.

DOTTIE WEBB (May / June 1998)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author provided free copies of his/her book to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love and make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.