

The only athletic sport I ever mastered was backgammon. ■ DOUGLAS WILLIAM JERROLD

AUSTRALIA

Since the early part of the twentieth century surf lifeguarding has been an important activity of men in Australia. However, women were restricted to a support role, such as serving on women's fund-raising committees. They also prepared refreshments for beach patrols and for surf carnivals. Although women had demonstrated their lifeguarding abilities by the early 1930s, they were not allowed to join beach patrols or to enter surf competitions. They were occasionally featured in competitions against other women in demonstrations at local surf carnivals.

During World War II women were needed to monitor beaches, but they were reinstated to their support role after the war. Finally, in 1980, the National Surf Life Saving Council granted women the right to test for the surf bronze medallion, which signified their qualification as lifeguards and gave them the opportunity to become active lifeguards. Women henceforth would be allowed to patrol beaches and to compete at surf carnivals. In fact, women won approximately one-third of the bronze medallions in the 1980–1981 surf session. However, their opportunities to succeed at surf carnivals were limited because they competed in the same categories as men.

Competition at the Top

Spurred by the selection of Melbourne, Australia, as the site of the 1956 Olympics, Australian lifeguards invited their counterparts from around the world to participate in an international lifeguarding competition. Male lifeguards from England, Ceylon, New Zealand, Australia, California, and Hawaii participated, and the event drew more than 100,000 spectators.

Since then lifeguarding competitions have expanded. Such competitions are intended to encourage lifeguards to develop skills and maintain high levels of fitness. Some local and national sponsors include the United States Lifesaving Association, the Dublin Lifesaving and Lifeguard Club of Ireland, the University of Tsukuba Lifesaving Club of Japan, the Surf Life

Saving Association of Great Britain, Surf Life Saving Australia, the Lifesaving Society of Canada, and the German Lifesaving Federation. International competitions are sponsored by the International Life Saving Federation.

Events in lifeguarding competitions include beach sprints, surf swimming, surf ski paddling, board paddling, team events, iron man and iron woman events (which include a combination of skills and require technical ability as well as physical fitness), and still water and pool events.

Lifesaving has become mandatory at virtually all public swimming venues, and the need for trained lifeguards continues to increase. Their participation will continue to be necessary for the future of recreational swimming.

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See also Surf Lifesaving

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Literature

Athletes may or may not be interested in literature, but many of the world's greatest writers have been keenly interested in sports. The tradition began, at the very latest, in ancient Greece. Pindar composed odes to sing the praises of the athletes who were

Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, there is no reason either in football or in poetry why the two should not meet in a man's life if he has the weight and cares about the words. ■ ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

victorious at Olympia and the other sites of sacred games. Homer's *Iliad* contains a vivid description of the funeral games held by Achilles in honor of Patroclus, his slain friend. Interrupting their siege of Troy, the Greek heroes paid tribute to their fallen comrade by competing in athletic contests. Homer's *Odyssey* includes two scenes in which Odysseus performs as an athlete, once to demonstrate his physical prowess to the Phaiacians, once to challenge (and slay) the suitors who had courted his wife during his twenty-year absence from Ithaca.

Epic Poems and Feats

Sports also figure importantly in the *Aeneid*, the poet Virgil's heroes epic account of the founding of Rome. Like Homer's heroes, Virgil's compete in funeral games (to which they add a non-Homeric boat-race). Roman gladiators and charioteers figure in many of the poet Martial's witty epigrams. Athletes are satirized, along with the spectators who idolized them, in the poems of Juvenal, from whom we have the scornful phrase "panem et circenses" (bread and circuses). Roman poets also had a lively interest in women's sports. The poems of Propertius include an eroticized account of women's sports in ancient Sparta, but the most memorable account of a female athlete appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the poet retold the Greek myth of Atalanta. Armed with a spear, she joined the hero Meleager in his hunt for the white-tusked Calydonian boar on Mount Parnassus. She was also famed as a wrestler and as a runner. Although she was determined never to marry, she lost a race, and gained a husband, when she paused to retrieve the golden apples that her clever suitor tossed at her feet. In the nineteenth century, Atalanta reappeared in poems by Walter Savage Landor, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Brunhilde's fate, as told in the *Nibelungenlied*, was similar to Atalanta's. The Icelandic maiden, having promised to marry the man who outperformed her athletically, was also defeated by a trick. Her suitor Gunther loses heart when he observes that it takes three men

to carry Brunhilde's spear. His spirits droop even further when twelve men struggle to lift one of the stones that she hefts with ease. Fortunately for Gunther, his powerful friend Siegfried, rendered invisible by a magic cap, intervenes and assists him to victory.

The *Nibelungenlied* is unusual in its treatment of a female athlete. When sports appear in medieval literature, they are almost invariably men's sports. A poem by Johann Fischart celebrates a bravado sporting achievement that accompanied an archery match in Strasbourg in the spring of 1576. To win a bet, boatmen whisked a kettle of porridge from Zurich to Strasbourg. Nineteen hours after their departure, the legendary pottage, still warm enough to be palatable, arrived at the archery venue. The poem, like the unconventional sports event it celebrates, is an oddity. Ordinarily, poets and writers of prose romance dazzled their readers with stories of tournaments. Jousts abound in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, in Thomas Malory's saga of King Arthur, and in the many courtly romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Knightly combat, like the joust between Gawan and Gramoflanz in Eschenbach's poem, was often a serious matter, but Ulrich von Liechtenstein's *Service of Ladies* was a comic poem in which a rebuffed lover rides away to compete in a whole series of tournaments in honor of his aloof and disdainful lady.

In the Islamic world, polo was considered to be the sport of kings, which explains why the royalty are forever playing polo in the *Book of Kings*, the national epic of Persia, written by the tenth-century poet Hakim Abu ol-Qasem Mansur Firdawsi. (It hardly matters that some of the regal players were placed by Firdawsi in periods that antedated the first historically attested mention of polo by many centuries.) Firdawsi, Hafiz, and innumerable other Islamic poets also raided polo for their metaphors. When they lauded their royal patrons (or their patrons' distant ancestors), the polo ball represented the earth and the mallet that propelled it symbolized kingly authority. When Islamic poets wrote of love, the same images were adapted to different

*For what do we live, but to make sport
for our neighbors, and laugh at them
in our turn? ■ JANE AUSTEN*

meanings. “For lovers the heart is like a ball and their back is curved like a polo stick.” (An odd image, but love is an inexplicable emotion.) Polo also found its way into the metaphors of mystical poetry, where the highest bliss is to become a polo ball, driven back and forth by a divine mallet. Chinese poets occasionally mention polo and other sports, including football, but neither the Confucian nor the Buddhist tradition encouraged writers to look to sports for inspiration.

Although medieval Christians also deprecated sports, including tournaments, which the Roman Catholic Church tried to ban, Renaissance attitudes were far less ascetic. Jacobean and Elizabeth drama was rife with images of sports. None of Shakespeare’s plays is entirely devoted to the adventures of an athlete, but the language of sports and sports themselves appear surprisingly often in his plays and in those of his contemporaries. Images drawn from hunting and hawking are especially frequent, but there are also Shakespearean references to archery, bowls, football, and a myriad of other sports. In *Henry V*, for instance, the haughty French dauphin sends the young English king a set of tennis balls that are allegedly “meeter for [his] spirit.” The dauphin’s messenger explains that Henry is too young to “revel into dukedoms.” Henry answers defiantly, “When we have match’d our rackets to these balls, / We will in France, by God’s grace, play a set / Shall strike his father’s crown [from his head].” The *dramatis personae* for *As You Like It* includes “Charles, Duke Frederick’s wrestler,” who shows his stuff on stage. Hamlet’s fencing match with Laertes ends so tragically that we forget that it began in sport, as a much-needed princely diversion.

Modern Sports Literature

English literature of early modern times was rich in references to horse races, fox hunts, and “animal sports.” The eighteenth-century poet John Hamilton Reynolds wrote, for instance, of “bull-dog breeders [and] badger-baiters,” and James Boswell attended a cockfight, where he was upset by the “uproar and noise” and by the lack

of pity for the “poor cocks . . . mangled and torn in the most cruel manner.” Pugilists were memorialized in popular ballads. Young women were as well:

Four Virgins that supposed were
A Race did run I now declare,
Sure such a race was never seen
As this at Temple Newsham Green.

Early in the nineteenth century, cricket became a major topos in English literature. “I doubt if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket match,” wrote Mary Russell Mitford in *Our Village* (1819), and hundreds of English novelists and poets have agreed with her.

As modern sports became institutionalized, during the nineteenth century, writers more important than Mitford took notice. Wilkie Collins told the story of a foolish runner in *Man and Wife* (1870), and George Bernard Shaw published an early novel, *Cashel Byron’s Profession* (1886), about a clever young boxer. Walt Whitman sang the praises of baseball in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), and Mark Twain, in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), imagined the game as it might have been played by an awkward team of armored knights. (Line drives bounced from the infielders’ breastplates.)

Although there are references to sports in *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534), two masterpieces by François Rabelais, and in the work of German poets such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Johann Gottfried von Herder, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a trio of passionate ice-skaters, modern sports did not play much of a role in novels, plays, and poems written in languages other than English until early in the twentieth century. (Hunters abound, but runners are few and far between.) When French and German writers belatedly discovered the possibilities of sports as a metaphor for life, they quickly made up for lost ground.

In the 1920s, Marcel Berger, Dominique Braga, Maurice Genevoix, Jean Giraudoux, Louis Hémon, Paul Morand, André Obey, Jean Prévost, and many others penned (or typed) ecstatic descriptions of runners and



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“To an Athlete Dying Young” by A. E. Housman (1859–1936)

The time you won your town the race
 We chaired you through the market-place;
 Man and boy stood cheering by,
 And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
 Shoulder high-high we bring you home,
 And set you at your threshold down,
 Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
 From fields where glory does not stay
 And early though the laurel grows
 It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
 Cannot see the record cut,
 And silence sounds no worse than cheers
 After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
 of lads that wore their honours out,
 Runners whom renown outran
 And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echos fade,
 The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
 And hold to the low lintel up
 The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
 Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
 And find unwithered on its curls
 The garland briefer than a girl's.

Source: Housman, A. E. (1896). To an athlete dying young. In *A Shropshire lad* (p. 26–28). London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co.

cyclists, boxers and rugby players. Even Marcel Proust, the least athletic of authors, managed to put Marcel's beloved Albertine on a bicycle. Among these auteurs sportifs, Henry de Montherlant was perhaps the most important. The major characters of *Les Olympiques*, the two parts of which appeared in 1920 and 1924, are all runners, female as well as male. The heroine of *Le Songe* (*The Dream*), which Montherlant published in 1922, is also a runner. When Dominique runs, Montherlant describes her ecstasy; when she poses and flexes before her mirror, Montherlant describes her athletic body in anatomical detail. (It is hard to think of another writer as spellbound by deltoids and abdominals.)

Among Montherlant's German contemporaries, Kasimir Edschmid was the most obsessed with sports. Gagaly Modosdy, one of the two women courted by Cesare Passari in Edschmid's novel *Sport and Gagaly* (1928), is described as “Athena in tennis shoes.” Her young friend, Pista Tossuth, is equally athletic. Cesare is a runner as well as a tennis player; he is also an airplane pilot and an ardent automobilista who represents the Fiat motor company in deadly contests against Peugeot-

driving rivals. After a number of tennis matches and automobile races, Cesare makes off with both women, who have, in the meantime, fallen madly in love with each other. Sadly, *Sport and Gagaly* has never been translated from German into English.

No European writer, not even Montherlant, was as sports-mad as Ernest Hemingway. Among his most memorable characters are hunters (*Green Hills of Africa*, “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”), fishermen (the Nick Adams stories, *The Old Man and the Sea*), boxers (“The Battler,” “Fifty Grand”), jockeys (“My Old Man”), and bullfighters (*Death in the Afternoon*, “The Undefeated”). Bullfighters also figure importantly, along with boxers, tennis players, fishermen, and cyclists, in Hemingway's finest novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). The novel, narrated by Jake Barnes, a wounded veteran of World War I, is a series of symbolic contrasts: between the sterility of the modern “waste land” and the vitality of the primitive countryside, between Paris and Pamplona, between Robert Cohen (boxer) and Pedro Romero (bullfighter). Robert is a pathetic figure who learned to box at Princeton merely to defend



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Extract from *The All of It* by Jeanette Haien

The mysteries of angling are central to the meaning of The All of It (1986), a novel by Jeanette Haien set in Ireland:

Yearning, he recalled the times in his life when he'd fished well through midge-ridden days in weather even meaner than this, and how, adroitly, Nature had put her claim on him and made him one with the very ground at his feet, and how, with every cast, past the gleaming green reeds of the shoreline shallows, he'd projected himself towards a specific spot in the rivers very heart, a different shading in the water that was like a quality of seriousness, or at a laze in the current's glide, some *felt* allurements of expectation which became (ah, fated fish) the focused haven of his energy.

Source: Haien, J. (1986). *The all of it*. New York: HarperCollins.

himself. Pedro, in contrast, is a man of simple dignity whose performance in the bullring is a lesson in courage, grace, and harmony. Jake envies and admires Pedro, has some sympathy for Robert, and despises the professional cyclists whom he meets at the end of the novel. Obscene and dishonest, the cyclists claim to be sportifs, but in Jake's eyes they symbolize a perversion of the ethos of sport.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, everywhere in the world, writers of popular fiction, including fiction intended for juveniles, seemed to turn en masse to sports. Major American and European writers, too, were entranced by the literary possibilities of sports; they became so numerous that it is impossible to do more than list them.

Among the baseball novels likely to find a permanent place in the American "canon" are Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* (1952), Mark Harris's *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1960), Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball*

Association, Inc. (1968), Philip Roth's *The Great American Novel* (1973), and W. P. Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe* (1982). Although the prewar fascination with boxers survived in the nonfiction works of Norman Mailer and Joyce Carol Oates, Leonard Gardner's *Fat City* (1969) is the only postwar novel that can compete in excellence with the best of the baseball fiction. Despite its popularity as a spectator sport, American football has inspired only one truly impressive novel, Don DeLillo's *End Zone* (1972). Basketball has fared even more poorly, with little to show beyond Jeremy Larner's *Drive, He Said* (1964). Swimmers can, however, rejoice in at least one novel likely to become a classic, Jenifer Levin's *Water Dancer* (1982).

With the exception of Patricia Nell Warren, who published *The Front Runner* in 1974, American writers have shown little interest in track-and-field sports. British, French, and German novelists have dominated the genre. Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959), a work of important social criticism, may lead the pack, but Yves Gibeau's *The Straight Line* (1956), Siegfried Lenz's *Bread and Circuses* (1959), and Guy Lagorce's *The Swiftiness of Wind* (1977) are not far behind. Per Olov Enquist's *The Second* (1978), another profoundly insightful exploration of sports and social class, has been unjustly neglected because it has never been translated from Swedish into English. The same sad fate befell Silvio Blatter's track-and-field novel, *Love Me Tender* (1980), written in German although the title was taken from a song by Elvis Presley.

Cyclists have also been given their due in British, French, and German fiction. Ralph Hurne's *The Yellow Jersey* (1973), Pierre Naudin's *Bad Roads* (1959), and Uwe Johnson's *Third Book about Achim* (1961) all recount the physical agony of this most arduous of major sports.

Soccer football is unquestionably the world's most widely played sport, but few if any of the hundreds of writers who have dramatized the game seem to have made the transition from national to international ac-

*If all the year were playing holidays,
to sport would be as tedious as
to work.* ■ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

claim. Dietrich Krusche's *On Top* (1973) and Rachid Boudjedra's *The Cup Winner* (1981) are excellent, untranslated, and unknown. A notable exception to this sad generalization is Peter Handke's *The Goalie's Fear during the Penalty Kick* (1978), in which a game of soccer plays an important symbolic role. Rugby football has done somewhat better. As a study of sports and social class in England, David Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960) is unsurpassed.

Storey was also the author of a sports-centered play, *The Changing Room* (1972), but sports are, in general, better suited to the cinema than to the theater. The proscenium stage is an awkward place to dramatize a sports event. Playwrights as different as Clifford Odets and Georg Kaiser have done it, but most of the boxing and cycling took place off-stage.

The high tide of sports-centered literature included thousands of poems, but England's John Betjeman is almost alone among major poets who demonstrated a sustained interest in sports. He was enthralled by athletic women "full of pent-up strength" ("Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden"), "strongly adorable" ("A Subaltern's Love-Song"), striding on the "strongest legs in Pontefract" ("The Licorice Fields at Pontefract"), or standing "in strong athletic pose" ("The Olympic Girl").

Sports have seldom attracted the attention of Asian and African writers with aspirations for an international reputation. Japanese literature has, however, produced a pair of exceptions. Body-builders and martial-arts specialists have a place in Mishima Yukio's fiction. Inoue Yasushi's *Wall of Ice* (1968) ranks among the best of the world's many novels of mountain-climbing. The currents of globalization may soon bring a flood of impressively crafted sports-centered literature from China or India or some other society whose authors have not yet been translated into a European language. Or, the crest of the wave may have passed. Younger writers seem far less interested in sports, as a literary theme, than were the writers of a generation ago. Although sports are certainly more important than ever before, there seems, as yet, to be no twenty-first-century Ernest

Hemingway to absorb their significance and transform them into lasting literature.

Allen Guttman

See also Magazines; Sportswriting and Reporting

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Lord's Cricket Ground

The establishment of the first Lord's Cricket Ground in 1787 coincided with the creation of the powerful Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which administered cricket and became cricket's law-regulating body. Known simply as Lord's, Lord's Cricket Ground is located at St. John's Wood in London. It has often been described as the mecca of world cricket, not only because of its long tradition but also because it has been formative in the rise and organization of English and world cricket. Lord's is the home not only of the influential MCC but also of the Middlesex Cricket Club, the England and Wales Cricket Board, and the International Cricket Council.