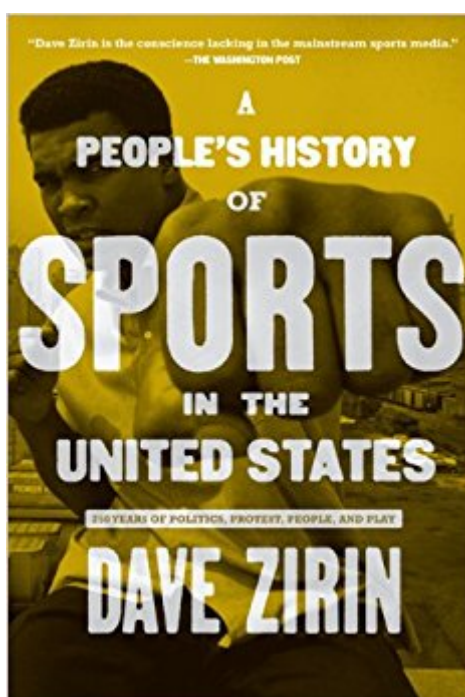


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# People's History Of Sports In The United States: 250 Years Of Politics, Protest, People, And Play (New Press People's History)



## Synopsis

In this long-awaited book from the rising superstar of sportswriting, whose blog *Edge of Sports* is read each week by thousands of people across the country, Dave Zirin offers a riotously entertaining chronicle of larger-than-life sporting characters and dramatic contests and what amounts to an alternative history of the United States as seen through the games its people played. Through Zirin's eyes, sports are never mere games, but a reflection of—and spur toward—the political conflicts that shape American society. Half a century before Jackie Robinson was born, the black ballplayer Moses Fleetwood Walker brandished a revolver to keep racist fans at bay, then took his regular place in the lineup. In the midst of the Depression, when almost no black athletes were allowed on the U.S. Olympic team, athletes held a Counter Olympics where a third of the participants were African American. A People's History of Sports in the United States is replete with surprises for seasoned sports fans, while anyone interested in history will be amazed by the connections Zirin draws between politics and pop flies. As Jeff Chang, author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, puts it, "After you read him, you'll never see sports the same way again."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Games are never just games. Even when children play, they are mastering the skills and cultural messages they will need to become successful adults. Yet in America, we cling to a cultural myth that sports are apolitical. We have the news channel CNN and the sports channel ESPN, and they are supposed to be entirely separate and distinct. In this enlightening book, sportswriter Dave Zirin

debunks this myth, exposing the politics, business interests, and cultural forces that have shaped modern sports. Zirin traces the history of sports from the lacrosse-playing days of the Choctaw Indians all the way to the modern steroid scandals and the behind-the-scenes politics of the international Olympic Games. Throughout, he focuses on how race-related conflicts have helped to shape modern athletics. The host of a popular blog called "The Edge of Sports" ([edgeofsports.com](http://edgeofsports.com)) and a regular contributor to the L.A. Times and the Nation magazine, Zirin has an engaging style that will appeal to sports fans, history buffs, and anyone else who wants their eyes opened. The favorable reviews and high sales certainly suggest that this book will help reduce the myth of sports as apolitical. (See the publisher's website, [newpress.com](http://newpress.com), for links to recent publicity, which includes a favorable plug in Time Magazine.) Author Jeff Chang promises that after reading this book "you'll never see sports the same way again"; author Jim Bouton (Ball Four) goes even further by predicting that this is "the opening shot in the battle to reclaim sports." Not only is the book enlightening, it is also a fun read full of engaging stories that you can share with friends and family while you are waiting for the game to begin.

Dave Zirin's offering in the "People's History" series (sparked by Howard Zinn's landmark "A People's History of the United States") provides a quick skim through the American sports scene as it intersects with politics. This is a clever, often thought-provoking book that reminds the reader that American sport has had a long, often ugly, growing process as it has evolved into its current form (that Zirin would likely summarize as The Age of Greed). First, the good stuff. This is a fast-paced, well-researched book that hits on many of the highlights of the bygone American sports scene. Perhaps the best portions of the book focus on the now-faded sport of boxing. If you've ever heard the (terrible) joke about how the lower on the socio-economic ladder you go, the better the boxer you are, you will appreciate learning about the national political importance of figures such as Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali. We also see the painful evolution of the athlete as a political figure as Jackie Robinson struggles to be the stoic exemplar of patience when he wanted nothing more than to break noses or when Jesse Owens returns from the Berlin Olympics to an America that refused to give him a decent job, just because of his skin. If you need a reminder of how ugly American racism has been, the sections on the difficult integration of college sports teams bring it to you in full, vibrant nastiness. Zirin does not limit his book to racial injustice - the book also provides a helpful reminder of the struggle women had to fight just to be able to play on the same field. Women's tennis plays a huge role, as Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova play tremendous roles in changing American attitudes.

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