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Barbara J. Keys. *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s.* Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, October 2006. \$49.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 978-0-674-02326-0.

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Zeiler

Reviewers: Heather L. Dichter, Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, and Steven W. Pope

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Introduction by Thomas Zeiler, University of Colorado at Boulder

“I see great things in baseball.” Although we cannot confirm that poet Walt Whitman actually authored this famous quote back in the 1840s, we do know that he later believed the sport to be a shaper of American character that reflected the country’s democratic institutions, striving disposition, and rising geo-political and economic greatness. In the middle of the next century, intellectual historian Jacques Barzun also viewed the sport as a mirror of national traits. In *God’s Country and Mine: A Declaration of Love Spiced with a Few Harsh Words* (1954), he offered the oft-quoted words, “Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball.” A half century after this publication, we come to Barbara Keys’ masterful work on how sports revealed international contact zones as well as distinctive qualities of nationhood. Arriving in the age of globalization, her study properly situates sports as a transnational movement amidst and between the national of Whitman and Barzun and the vast global arena.

Thomas W. Zeiler, a professor of history and international affairs at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has published widely on American foreign relations. He is the executive editor of the journal Diplomatic History and editor of American Foreign Relations: A Guide to the Literature. His current projects include a global history of World War II, a study of globalization and sports, and an overview of the world economy since 1945. His most recent book is Ambassadors in Pinstripes: The Spalding World Baseball Tour and the Birth of the American Empire (2006).

Of course, as readers will discover, Keys’ focus is not on baseball, but she does examine the primary influence of nationalism on sporting events, particularly the Olympics movement and also other aspects such as athleticism and soccer. Among many others, the main contribution of this book to the literature on diplomacy, sports, and culture regards Keys’ analysis of the tension between the manipulation of sports as an expression of national identity and sports’ position as a transnational carrier of culture abroad. This is the central theme explored by the three participants in this H-Diplo forum. Heather Dichter, Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, and Steven Pope bring fresh eyes and a critical gaze to this book, and they

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do so, quite appropriately, from international angles that transcend American exceptionalism. Clearly, like Keys, they are engaged in internationalizing and globalizing the historiography of sports, and thus are well-positioned (literally, in the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain) to address this book.

While there may be points of issue with her analysis, all the commentators recognize the ways in which Keys exhibits the interconnectedness of the national and international. Much work remains to be done on this subject and methodology, but like any expertly cast and important study, this one opens up avenues of research opportunity and raises questions about the nature of such critical, and oftentimes loosely conveyed terms (I rightly stand accused!) as globalization and imperialism, and even culture and democracy. In any case, the H-Diplo forum contributors agree that Keys has enhanced our understanding of nations by the very process of lifting them out of their boundaries and placing them in an international context. Barbara Keys has, therefore, further bolstered scholars seeking not only new trends in the study of international affairs but a welcome lift to the neglected study of sports as a cultural, political, and economic phenomenon.

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