

Pope

## Patriotic Games

Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926

In *Patriotic Games*, historian Stephen Pope explores the ways sport was transformed from a mere amusement into a metaphor for American life. Between the 1890s and the 1920s, sport became the most pervasive popular cultural activity in American society. During these years, basketball was invented, football became a mass spectator event, and baseball soared to its status as the "national pastime." Pope demonstrates how America's sporting tradition emerged from a society fractured along class, race, ethnic, and gender lines. Institutionalized sport became a trans- class mechanism for packaging power and society in preferred ways--it popularized an interlocking set of cultural ideas about America's quest for national greatness. Nowhere was this more evident than the intimate connection established between sport and national holiday celebrations. As Pope reveals, Thanksgiving sports influenced the holiday's evolution from a religious occasion to a secular one. On the Fourth of July, sporting events infused patriotic rituals with sentiments that emphasized class conciliation and ethnic assimilation. In a time of social tensions, economic downturns, and unprecedented immigration, the rituals and enthusiasms of sport, Pope argues, became a central component in the shaping of America's national identity.

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