



What Sport Tells Us About Life: Bradman's Average, Zidane's Kiss And Other Sporting Lessons. Ed Smith

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There is a huge category of sports fan: people who love a bloody good argument. Sport makes them think, engage and argue. Given that people already take sport so very seriously, and at such an intense level of enquiry, then Ed Smith concludes we should draw out some of sport's intellectual lessons and practical uses

What Sport Teaches Us About Life gives us a rare glimpse into the world of sport as seen from an extraordinarily keen, and closely-involved observer. In one chapter Smith extols the virtues of amateurism in today's professional world; in another he explains why there'll never be another sportsman as dominant as Don Bradman. He unearths the hidden dimensions of England's 2005 Ashes win, examines the impact of the free market on cricket and football, argues that cheating is not always as clear cut as it might seem.

What Sport Tells Us About Life: Bradman's Average, Zidane's Kiss And Other Sporting Lessons. Ed Smith Details

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Jagmag H K says

This being my very first book by Ed Smith, i didnt know exactly what to expect. I had read a few articles by him related to cricket and found them a lot less shallow and well thought through than the regular i-will-tell-you-what-i-saw kind of article. Also, Ed Smith came highly recommended by my friend Vishy, and he being quite a discerning reader, I did have high expectations. I was not disappointed.

The breadth of topics ranged from the classic discussion points about talent v/s practice to the effects of free market capitalism to the usually hardly brought up issues of cheating in the game and even the role played by luck.

Overall, I think the author managed not just to stick to the central theme of the book across the book but managed to use excellent analogies to tie in the broader aspects of both sports and life without making it sound too preachy or philosophical. The only misfit for me seemed to be the chapter on marxism, CLR James and Cricket. This chapter somehow didnt quite fit into the scheme of the book and seemed to be more like something added to make up the numbers. It might have been more apt for a book on cricket but not one that necessarily had any place in a general discussion on sport.

I liked was the way he has drawn from his knowledge / experience on a wide variety of sports like rugby, baseball, football , basketball and of course cricket in various instances to illustrate his point. I might have been a lot less convinced of some of his arguments if they all revolved around the authors experience in his primary sport i.e. cricket. While it may not be necessarily the case, but to me at least, the fact that that topics being discussed are relevant and apply to sport in general and that seems to justify what would otherwise have been a too grandiose title for the book.

While i was quite happy about the range of topics he chose to discuss, I must say that I thought there was nothing new / interesting in his talk about some of the topics. I did end up feeling that all he does in these chapters is state the obvious. While there might be nothing wrong in doing that, i must say i expected a bit more than that especially as some of the other chapters held for me at least, brilliant insights into how professional players both think and play but also how it affects their lives. As a result, my least favourite parts of the book are chapters like 4. Talent curse 6. History matters 8. Luck matters 10. Cheating

My most favourite parts of the book are the chapters on Bradman, Amateurism in sport, Zidanes kiss and Swansea. I especially loved the one about Zidanes Kiss because i found it very insightful. It is one of those events that i saw live on TV and being a hard-core supporter of the Azurri, i didnt mind it at all but I have wondered - many a times - as to why he did it. The authors insight into that seemed to me, to be a very plausible argument and something i would never have thought of - on my own device. I also loved the article about Swansea because it almost made me feel like i was with the author on St. Helens and witnessing its decay. I could almost, feel his pain at what was lost - the connection of elite sport with everyday life. It was definitely one of the highlights of the book for me.

My favourite truism in this book was the following quote in the chapter "What do people see when they watch sport".About the "Passive fan", he writes and i quote *They constantly find in sport new versions of old*

stories - the oldest and deepest stories of all. They may wish these stories would turn out happily more often, but they recognize that they never will. There is a hope tinged with regret, a very human kind of hope

Rebecca says

Great book which takes a light look at sporting anomalies and why they happen. The author's strong grasp of statistics, sporting history and life-skills of pro sportsmen gives him an unique insight into conundrums.

I like a lot of his writing - but you need a good vocabulary and an ability to grasp long sentence constructions and complex concepts. It's not a "light read" at bedtime.

Recommend

Tisaranavamsa says

The book begins well but drags you later on.

A cricket fan might love the book but for the rest, it's very mediocre.

David Evans says

Extremely insightful and thought provoking. Very readable chapters on a number of aspects of why we love sport so much. Whether it's talent, luck, cheating or history Smith has a way of explaining the importance of different qualities that combine to make successful sportmen or sportswomen tick.

Renny Morgan says

Very good book in so much detail it appealed a lot to me. Sometimes it is hard to understand but never the less so good. This book is great for other reasons like if you find a chapter hard or boring you can skip it! All you have to read is the intro and the chapters that appeal to you.

Huckleberry Bluedog says

It was never anything other than an effortless pleasure to turn each page. You obviously have to love sport, and cricket in particular, but Smith has an easy and sincere style which is greatly helped by Smith being a current sportsman, whose been at the top of his game, and who writes his own words. Some of the philosophical stuff tried a little too hard to be profound, but that's easily forgiven and this is a thoroughly

recommended read to anyone with a passing interest in sport.

Caleb says

A book by an English professional cricket player is a collection of essays on sports' lessons for life. Some are quite insightful, and Smith is both well-read and knows a decent amount about other sports, particularly baseball. That said, the essay for me that would have been the best--whether capitalism is good for sports--was completely off the mark, missing the point that European soccer is pure capitalism, leading to amazing club teams that often hemorrhage money while American sports, particularly football, are incredibly socialist with salary caps and revenue sharing such that tiny markets like Green Bay and Jacksonville have teams and LA has none. He seemed to conclude that parity rules in soccer, when it doesn't, and focused too much on baseball and cricket where the money wars are different.

Shoaib says

ed smith likes sports, waffling and logic, the three ingredients that make a great book.

Jeff says

great book, particularly sharp on why england won the ashes in 2005

Peter says

:-0

Peter Geyer says

One of the things interesting about sport and life as far as conversation and opinion goes (not necessarily the same event) is the amount of polarisation that goes on, art and sport or art and education being opposites for instance, or that sport is trivial and other pursuits are more worthy and serious. Sometimes there's a class basis to this kind of discussion, even regarding what sports you're supposed to like, or play, or watch.

For me, a genuine interest in sport has enabled connection with my fellow males, who otherwise struggle with my intellectual interests. Those who know me from the intellectual side (or what passes for it) can be surprised that I would be interested in football, for instance, or even have played it at some level. These include other males, but also people in general who presume book-reading and writing don't go with chasing a ball around, in whatever format.

By doing so there's a lot missed about people and society in general particularly if you have difficulty in believing anyone can be interested in "A" and if they do, they must be subhuman or a snob and whatever

their interest is should be banned, balls or books. Barbara Ehrenreich deals with a variant of this in her *Dancing in the Streets*, about "collective joy" – it's a great book, even though the "joy" outlined in it isn't to my taste.

Some people love their sport more than anything else – family, children, work, religion. The latter has countless stories on where the boundaries of worship lie. The mother of a friend of mine used to attend football games with him and a small group that included me. The team we were supporting was more important than her husband (who supported a different club), or her 5 children. She didn't really know much about the game in depth, as the rest of us fancied we did, but it was an important part of her life, and so deserved respect.

Ed Smith is an educated man, successful at cricket and writing. I've previously read his book on Luck, which is well worth reading, and a brief chapter here is on that topic. There are other chapters on amateurism, the curse of talent, the free market, price, champions like Zidane, and Bradman, cheating, why history matters in sport, Moneyball etc, what people see when they watch sport and so on.

Smith is a good writer. He's clear in his prose, thinks clearly, gives appropriate examples, including from his experience. It's an advantage if you know something about his sport (cricket) but he also talks about rugby, baseball, soccer and other general observations. This isn't two-dimensional like many sport or general interest texts and there are genuine insights even if you know little about it. It's a nice, relaxing read that gets you to think about all sorts of things, in the context of sport.

Mark says

Entertaining but lacking in sustained analysis - a bit of a hodgepodge.

David says

Without wanting to damn with faint praise, it is a really interesting book. Sport is ultimately all about having fun, but Ed Smith adds an analytical and intellectual approach to the meaning of sport which, grafted onto his own experiences as an international sportsman, casts some events in a totally new light. I love books about sport that also make you think, and this is almost up there with Simon Barnes' book for quality.

Jack Barraclough says

The early chapters were mostly pop psychology - and really didn't say much at all. A couple of the later chapters were fairly interesting - especially the chapter on his Welsh roots. Overall, it was all a bit random and didn't really seem to reflect the statement on the front of the book.

Steve Cuss says

Right up my street

Nick Burridge says

One of the best books about Sport and Life. You do not have to be interested in sport to enjoy this.

Simon says

I'm in the middle of a very good run of sports books at the moment. Illuminating and entertaining from someone who was also good enough to play for England. Shove it in the Christmas stocking of any thinking sports fan.

Simon says

I'd give this 3.5 stars if I could, but on this scale I believe in rounding up. Sometimes the top-heavy cricket stories, followed by rugby stories in second place, felt a bit relentless when there are so many sports to choose from. However, I check this feeling and decide I'm being harsh; to have a professional sportsman that can write - and express his own thoughts - so well is a rarity! Plus, these are sports I tend to not to watch often (baseball gets many mentions too) so it was an interesting insight into a different area of team sports. This was a great choice for a long weekend holiday in Dorset, a quick but thought-provoking read. Also, Smith's book references have given me cause to note down three books for future reading, so it's been a definite success.
