

accepted part of the everyday life of all classes of society, individual differences in erotic taste notwithstanding.

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ATHLETICS

Athletics is the broad field of physical activity in which strength is called into play and increased. Homosexual men and women have been and are active in both mainstream and gay community athletics. Their experience in athletics is, in many respects, the same as that of their heterosexual counterparts: experiences such as physical exertion, team membership and competition.

Athletics and the Male Image.

Since the ancient Olympic Games, athletics has been considered a sign of masculinity. Women, until the twentieth century, have been excluded from athletics; they were prohibited from participation in the Sacred Games of Olympia and from the activities of the *gymnasia* of Ancient Greece. (There is evidence, however, that in ancient China, upper-class women played a version of soccer with men.) With the emancipation of Western women in the twentieth century, some became athletes. The modern Olympics prohibited the participation of women until 1928. At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics less than a quarter of the athletes were female.

In the nineteenth century, theories of homosexuality were developed which saw it as a symptom of gender confusion; in conjunction with that, there developed a common belief that homosexual men were essentially feminine and lesbians masculine.

The nineteenth-century expansion of the British Empire and its sphere of cultural influence, the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, the rise of the British "public school" system, and the central role that sports played in that system have made a cumulative contribution to the twentieth-century Western conception of sports. Athletics became the quintessential ex-

pression of masculine values, the values of model citizenship: aggression, competition, racism, elitism, militarism, imperialism, sexism, and heterosexism. Many writers have suggested that athletics and healthy heterosexual masculinity are popularly equated. That athletic image is dramatically unlike the dominant religious, medical, and legal models of homosexuality which categorized homosexuals as sinful, pathological, and criminal. Because the popular images of the athlete and the homosexual are virtually antithetical, model healthy citizen and degenerate pathological criminal respectively, many athletes, especially professionals, have found it difficult publicly to acknowledge their homosexual orientation. Consequently, it is difficult to know who in professional sports is homosexual. Some famous athletes are known to be homosexual, among them John Menlove Edwards (mountaineering), Billie Jean King (tennis), David Kopay (football), Martina Navratilova (tennis) and Bill Tilden (tennis).

Lesbian and Gay Athletes. The masculine signification of athletics, in conjunction with the popular belief that lesbians are more masculine than their heterosexual counterparts, has led to the notion that many athletic women are lesbian. It seems likely that there is a concentration of lesbians in athletics, but the factual truth of this assumption cannot be determined. Statistical research on the presence of homosexuals in athletics is inevitably flawed; fear of negative repercussions mitigates against athletes identifying themselves as homosexual. There has been a concerted effort by individual athletes, sports organizations, administrators, coaches and scholars in the history and sociology of sport to disguise the substantial participation of lesbians in sport. Many lesbian athletes have been denied participation on teams and been fired from positions as national coaches when their lesbianism became known. Research on lesbians in athletics is minimal and pro-

posals for research are frequently dismissed by academic juries. Many lesbian athletes try to downplay lesbian participation, saying that if the extent of lesbianism in athletics were known "it would give women's sports a bad name."

Whereas in this century athletics has been a popular occupation for lesbians, until the development of the "modern" gay liberation movement, many homosexual men avoided athletics. It could be that they have been aware of the masculine heterosexual signification of athletic participation and wanted no part of it. Standard athletic insults refer to fags, pansies, or sissies. To avoid such derision, finding athletics socially and psychically traumatic, many homosexuals eschewed sports. Male homosexual oral history research projects reveal few references to athletic activity; when it is mentioned, it is usually with considerable distaste.

Gay Sports. The modern gay liberation movement fostered a strong reaction to the old medical definition of homosexuality which associated it with gender confusion. Gay writers of the 1970s saw gay liberation, in some measure, as liberation from the oppressive restrictions which society exercised over homosexuals through the effeminate stereotype of the homosexual. The popular gay conception of the homosexual has changed from degenerate effeminacy to "normal" masculinity. Consequently, gay men who want to look "masculine and normal" by developing athletic bodies have taken up exercise. Whereas before the Stonewall Rebellion (1969), the representation of urban homosexual men in athletics was probably equal to or less than their representation in society as a whole, gay men now comprise either a very substantial minority or, in some instances, a majority of the population of urban athletic facilities. For example, YMCAs in major North American and European cities have large homosexual memberships. Many North American cities now have athletic clubs which are almost exclusively gay male.

Since athletics offers a subjective feeling of physical power, homosexual men who have felt powerless because of the low social position of their sexual orientation, can find athletics especially significant. They can derive intense satisfaction from excelling in a sport knowing that as "faggots" they are beating "macho men" at their own game. Gay liberation encouraged gay athletes to come out. Coming out has made it possible for some to become athletes.

Although there have been "respectable artistic treatments" of the "jock" in gay literature, for example *The Front Runner* (1974) by Patricia Nell Warren, the most prominent position the jock has in gay culture is probably in gay pornography. One of North America's earliest and most prolific gay pornographers was the Athletic Model Guild of Los Angeles, which has produced soft-core gay pornography since 1945. Other examples of sporty soft-core gay pornography can be found in Scott Madsen's *Peak Condition* (1985) and in the photos of athletes by Bruce Weber and Christopher Makos which frequently appear in Andy Warhol's magazine *Interview*. Athletes are often featured in hardcore pornographic publications and videos with titles such as "Jocks," "Spokes," and "These Bases are Loaded."

One of the products of the gay liberation movement has been the creation of specifically gay political and social organizations. Gay athletic clubs, which can be found in major cities across North America, constitute an important aspect of gay community life. The common purpose of gay sports groups is essentially twofold: to promote social interaction, and to provide athletic opportunities for people who share a way of life. The roster of gay community sports clubs is extensive; space affords only a brief sampling of this significant facet of gay culture. In many North American cities the largest gay organizations are sports clubs. There are outing clubs affiliated with the International Gay and Lesbian Outdoor Organization; they

have names like the "Out and Out Club" and organize activities such as bicycle tours, cross-country and down-hill skiing, hiking, camping, canoeing, parachuting and white-water rafting. Included in the list of organized North American gay community sports groups are: Spokes, a cycling club in Vancouver; The San Francisco Gay Women's Softball League; and the Judy Garland Memorial Bowling League in Toronto. The Ramblers Soccer Club of New York City is one of nine teams in the United Nations Soccer League; it is the only non-UN member and the only openly gay team.

There are gay sports governing bodies for many sports. The North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting amateur softball for all persons with a special emphasis on gay participation; it also establishes uniform playing rules and regulations. The International Gay Bowling Association has 65 local affiliates across North America with over ten thousand members. The National Gay Volleyball Association has clubs in over 60 North American cities. Many cities have umbrella sports organizations which interact with other gay community groups and help to coordinate local, national and international competitions. There is the Metropolitan Sports Association in Chicago, the San Francisco Arts and Athletics and the Metropolitan Vancouver Athletic and Arts Association which is a Registered Society and has offices in the Sports British Columbia Building, a provincially funded facility. Although there are gay sports groups in other parts of the world, Australia being an important example, most gay community sports activity at the present takes place in North American cities.

The ideological signification of gay athletics is important. Over the last ten years or so, there has been a shift in focus in the gay liberation movement from the dialectic of oppression and liberation to the experience of gay pride. An impor-

tant expression of gay pride can be found in gay athletics; in New York City, a major event in the gay pride festivities, one which attracts athletes from all parts of North America, is the five mile Gay Pride Run in Central Park. A prestigious international gay pride event is the Gay Games. Gay liberationists have seized upon athletics as an ideological instrument of gay politics. Athletic events are promoted by gay community organizers to counteract the frequently negative image of homosexuals by emphasizing a picture of health and good citizenship.

Gay community sports have been used for overt political ends. The relations between urban gay communities and police forces are notoriously poor. Many cities, including Vancouver, New York, and San Francisco, have annual competitions between police and gay all-star teams in an effort to improve relations.

Conclusion. The participation of homosexual men and women in athletics is extensive. Their presence in mainstream athletics is often not visible because of the fact that they frequently pass as straight. Their experience in that milieu can be unique and is intimately related to the history of sexuality and popular conceptions of masculinity and athletics. Gay liberation has brought with it a flourishing of gay culture which has produced a plethora of gay teams, clubs, and sports governing bodies across North America, a trend which is spreading to other parts of the world.

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Brian Pronger

AUDEN, WYSTAN HUGH (1907–1973)

Anglo-American poet and critic.

The child of cultivated, upper-class parents, Auden profited from a traditional British elite schooling. As a student at Christ College, Oxford, he first excelled in science, but shifted to English with the intention of becoming a "great poet." A quick study, Auden acquired an undergraduate reputation as an almost oracular presence, and he began to assemble around him a group of young writers that included Christopher Isherwood (whom he had met at preparatory school), C. Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender. After leaving Oxford in 1928 Auden decided to spend a year in Berlin learning German. He then held a series of school-teaching jobs that allowed time for writing.

Like the other members of his group—who came to be known as "the poets of the thirties"—Auden broke with the pastoral placidity of the Georgian trend in English poetry, seeking to encompass such modern technology and such trends in thought as Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism. Although he later repudiated their ideological commitments, Auden's early poems have a numinous ambiguity that unfortunately was largely lost in his later more pellucid but often facile work. In his early poetry the exaltation of the figures of the Airman and the Truly Strong Man represents a continuation of the adolescent aesthete's admiration for the "hearty." His work in the 1930s had both the exuberance and the limitations of youth.

In 1937 he expressed his sympathy for the loyalist cause by visiting Spain, and the following year he traveled to China with Isherwood. In 1940, having become disillusioned with left-wing causes, he converted back to Anglicanism, a change that profoundly affected the character and tone of his writing. With the outbreak of World War II in Europe, he settled in New York, where he met and fell in love with a young man, Chester Kallman, who was destined to be his lifelong companion. This relationship was celebrated in a series of poems to an anonymous and ungendered lover, and also in a deliberately outrageous composition, "The Queen's Masque." This unpublished dramatic composition, intended to be performed for Kallman's twenty-second birthday on February 7, 1943, was not rediscovered until 1988. In 1941 Auden collaborated with the gay composer Benjamin Britten in a chamber opera, *Paul Bunyan*. Through Kallman, whose knowledge was expert and unflagging, Auden expanded his interest in opera, and the two collaborated on a libretto for Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, as well as other works. Although actual sexual relations between them ceased after the first years, the two men made a life together based on mutual trust and affection. Auden took charge of earning a living, while Chester excelled in cooking and homemaking. Despite some asperities, their relationship survived not only in New York, but in Ischia on the Mediterranean and in Kirchstetten in Austria, where they spent the summers.

Auden's later work is marked by ambitious cycles, such as *A Christmas Oratorio* (1945) and *The Age of Anxiety* (1947), which are technically expert but, for many readers at least, lacking in the charisma of truly great poetry. Partly to make ends meet, Auden produced a considerable body of prose criticism, and this sometimes deals movingly with other homosexual authors. His most explicit homosexual poem is a piece of doggerel called "The Platonic Lay" or "A Day for a