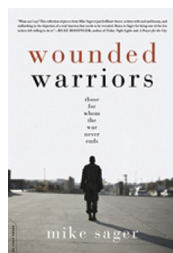


ancestors; in Nepal, a saintly woman flees an arranged marriage to retain her personal freedom by becoming a respected Buddhist nun and feminist leader; in Hong Kong, masses of educated Filipina women who labor as maids in order to send money to families and children find comfort and purpose in a charismatic church; and a farm in New England, home of the first American teacher of Zen, is planted with seeds of sorrow as well as hope for enlightenment. What Sarah LeVine found as she traveled the world researching and becoming close to the people of four continents is that in facing the full range of human emotions, orthodoxy in belief and practice may not be a match for people's traditions in bringing them hope and comfort.

Sarah LeVine grew up in England and was educated at Oxford, the University of Chicago, and Harvard, where she earned her doctorate and now teaches in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. She is also author, with David Gellner, of the book *Rebuilding Buddhism*. (June) *Kristine Morris*



**Wounded Warriors:
Those for Whom the
War Never Ends**

Mike Sager

Da Capo Press, Softcover

\$16.95 (288pp)

978-0-306-81735-9

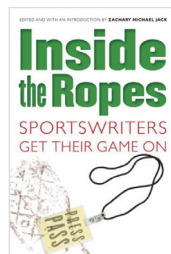
It doesn't matter—Iraq War, drug war, culture war, gang war, race war, or Vietnam War—where there's war there are both the wounded and the survivors who get to fight another day. Sager exhumes real people behind potent stereotypes, hopping from a Marine barracks for a regiment of wounded warriors to an island paradise owned by Marlon Brando to the filthy dog fighting pits of North Philadelphia to drug dens to high IQ societies to yoga sessions for the NAAFA (National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance). Says Sager after a fruitless pursuit of infamously reporter-adverse Marlon Brando: "I'm a journalist. I take scrapings of their insides, samples of their deepest thoughts and feelings, and then I display it for everyone to see." And he usually does get his story. In this latest of three essay collections Sager, a regular contributor to *Esquire*, *Rolling Stone*, and *GQ*, dissects his subjects with surgical skill, serving up juicy splices of lives lived in the trenches.

In the most compelling chapter, Sager hangs with a group of wounded Iraq War Marines whose mission has changed because of the seriousness of their injuries. Each might have been a candidate for a discharge before Lieutenant Colonel Tim Maxwell, also profoundly wounded during his sixth deployment, convinced the Corps to keep them on and to help them recover to possibly become active fighters again. Each soldier speaks for himself and Sager is brilliant at getting folks to talk. Their reasons for

being in the battle, their injuries, and their present circumstances are gripping. Maxwell, who suffered a traumatic head and brain injury, describes his efforts to help returning casualties: "[Y]oung Marines, they have a lot of mixed feelings when they get back. I use my story...I tell them about good luck and bad luck."

But Sager's point is that many situations breed casualties. He dives into a Los Angeles Chicano gang, their power both made by selling crack and unmade by the members' addiction to it. He rides along with Charlie, a smart and thoughtful man encased in hundreds of pounds of fat, who can't walk down the street without sneers and comments from passersby. He visits Vietnam vets living in the Thailand who stay for the old feelings of war's excitement or to stretch their pensions.

Sager looks into the lives of some of society's walking wounded and sees their humanity, their accomplishments, and their everyday battle to survive. (October) *Deirdre Sinnott*



**Inside the Ropes:
Sportswriters Get
Their Game On**

**Zachary Michael Jack,
editor**

Bison Books/University of
Nebraska Press, Softcover

\$24.95 (508pp)

978-0-8032-5997-3

Many writers dream of swapping lives, at least for a little while, with their subjects. This is especially true in the sports field, where writers are surrounded by men and women who are admired for their athletic prowess. George Plimpton turned this genre into a cottage industry with full-length books about football (*Paper Lion*), baseball (*Out of My League*), and hockey (*Open Net*), among others. Most recently Stefan Fatsis published *A Few Seconds of Panic*, chronicling his experience playing for the Denver Broncos.

The contributors to *Inside the Ropes* have followed in Plimpton's footsteps, to a lesser extent, taking on a wide range of activities that work better in some cases than others.

The nearly forty stories reach into every corner of the sports world. All the "usual suspects" can be found within these pages and are handled by some of the best writers in the business. On the other hand, some topics stretch the definition of the word "sport": Grabbing fish barehanded? Shuffleboard? Fantasy baseball? Poker (which constitutes the largest essay in the collection)? Can they be compared with subjecting oneself to charging linebackers or large brawny men wearing twelve-ounce boxing gloves? Yet those who engage in or follow such relatively genteel activities will be fascinated to learn that it takes more than desire to succeed.

Several of these sports are individually demanding. Donald Katz writes about his partic-

ipation in a marathon skating race in Holland (as well as the aforementioned fish-grabbing); Bill McKibben gives his take on cross-country skiing, while Dan Washburn raced dragon boats. Most of them would agree: this stuff isn't as easy as it looks from the distance and safety of the stands or living room. Injury and, perhaps worse, embarrassment are constant possibilities. For example, Tom Verducci, a baseball writer for *Sports Illustrated*, tried his hand as an umpire during a spring training game. The best advice he received? Don't rip your pants.

Most sportswriters—the Walter Mittys of journalism—herein present a mix of healthy curiosity about the games they cover and are humbled in the presence of those who perform them well. Some, however, could be accused of hubris, taking the attitude that they—with whatever amateur skills they might possess—can mix it up with the big boys (and girls). (November) *Ron Kaplan*



**The Year That
Changed the Game:
The Memorable
Months That Shaped
Pro Football**

Jonathan Rand

Potomac Books, Hardcover

\$27.95 (246pp)

978-1-59797-215-4

Younger football fans can't conceive of a time when conditions weren't as they are today, with multi-million-dollar contracts and 300-pound linemen the norm. But the modern NFL did not spring on the scene whole cloth; there were pioneers and a watershed event.

Rand, a sportswriter specializing in football, traces the months immediately following the 1958 championship game between the New York Giants and The Baltimore Colts. The contest, often referred to as "the greatest game ever played," was the light bulb that showed football was on the verge of something big. The title game—the most watched sporting event on television to date—was evidence that football was ready to take that giant leap forward.

Readers might be curious about the disproportionate amount of narrative given to football in the Lone Star state. Indeed had Lamar Hunt—son of billionaire oil man H.L. Hunt—been granted his wish and allowed to buy a franchise in Dallas, who knows what the game would be like today. He was turned down by the NFL, but rather than take no for an answer, Hunt labored until he got not just one team, but a whole new entity: the American Football League. In response, the long-established NFL countered by adding a few new teams of their own.

Other legends of the game who came to prominence during the year include Vince Lombardi, a coach for the Giants, who implemented his win-at-all-costs philosophy to turn the heretofore sad sack Green Bay Packers into a proud dynasty. Also notable was Pete Rozelle,