

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

Deportes

The Making of a Sporting Mexican Diaspora

JOSÉ M ALAMILLO

"Long before today's humanitarian activists clustered at the U.S.-Mexico border in support of artificially fractured communities and separated families, Mexican athletes—women and men—countered racist, sexist and nationalist sporting projects with their own transnational agency. With careful historical research, José M. Alamillo shows how, during the first half of the Twentieth Century, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans played, watched and wrote about baseball, boxing, basketball, running and other sports. An important book for our time, *Deportes* unveils a heretofore unwritten history, as it illuminates the possibilities that inhere in diasporic sport networks, to empower and unify, rather than to divide."

—Michael A. Messner, author of *Guys Like Me: Five Wars, Five Veterans for Peace*

"This book is a real beacon in the growing field of transnational studies and presents a cutting edge historical observation of Latino/a sport in the western hemisphere. José Alamillo's commanding knowledge of diaspora anchors his scrutiny of the Mexican sporting culture, gender identities and transnational networks. His attractive narrative makes this study very readable, is well-suited for a scholarly and lay audience, and is a must for students in ethnic and gender studies. As well, viewed through a sporting lens, the author's examination of migration and national identity increases the uniqueness of this compelling work."

—Samuel O. Regalado, author of *Viva Baseball!: Latin Major Leaguers and their Special Hunger*

"Filled with unforgettable figures, *Deportes* provides the first transnational history of organized sports as recreation, occupation, and cultural identity among ethnic Mexicans in the Southwest."

—Vicki L. Ruiz, author of *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*

Spanning the first half of the twentieth century, *Deportes* uncovers the hidden experiences of Mexican male and female athletes, teams and leagues and their supporters who fought for a more level playing field on both sides of the border. Despite a widespread belief that Mexicans shunned physical exercise, teamwork or "good sportsmanship," they proved that they could compete in a wide variety of sports at amateur, semiprofessional, Olympic and professional levels. Some even made their mark in the sports world by becoming the "first" Mexican athlete to reach the big leagues and win Olympic medals or world boxing and tennis titles.

These sporting achievements were not theirs alone, an entire cadre of supporters—families, friends, coaches, managers, promoters, sportswriters, and fans—rallied around them and celebrated their athletic success. The Mexican nation and community, at home or abroad, elevated Mexican athletes to sports hero status with a deep sense of cultural and national pride. Alamillo argues that Mexican-origin males and females in the United States used sports to empower themselves and their community by developing and sustaining transnational networks with Mexico. Ultimately, these athletes and their supporters created a "sporting Mexican diaspora" that overcame economic barriers, challenged racial and gender assumptions, forged sporting networks across borders, developed new hybrid identities and raised awareness about civil rights within and beyond the sporting world.

JOSÉ M. ALAMILLO is professor of Chicana/o Studies at California State University Channel Islands (Camarillo, CA) and author of *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town* and co-author of *Latinos in U.S. Sport*. He is a consultant on Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History exhibition on Latinos and Latinas in baseball.

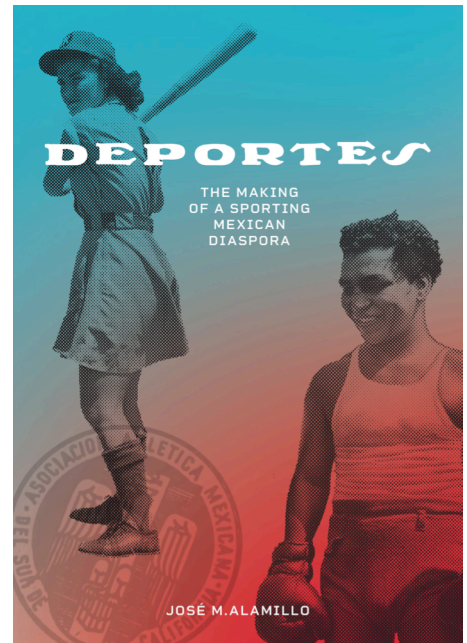
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