

Book Review

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“Nothing Finer: North Carolina’s Sports History and the People Who Made It.”

by John Dell, Winston-Salem Journal, October 6, 2014

It is all right there.

The vast and interesting history of sports in North Carolina is the subject of a 402-page book called “Nothing Finer: North Carolina’s Sports History and the People Who Made It.” The book’s topics run the gamut from high-school sports to pro sports and everything in between.

Wilt Browning — an award-winning journalist who worked for the Greensboro News & Record and Asheville Citizen Times — edited the book and also wrote about the history of baseball in the state. Browning, 77, said he and the other contributors were able to bring the book to life because they all lived it.

“I don’t know this as fact, but I doubt there is any other state that has done something like this,” Browning said. “There’s such a rich history in this state. Out of all the books that I have worked on, this was the most fun.”

Browning, who lives in Kernersville, had long had the idea to put together a book like this, but never got around to completing it. Finally, with the help from the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in Raleigh, the book was finished in the spring.

Browning also got a push from his good friend, Herb Appenzeller, a former professor and athletics director at Guilford College. The two met for lunch one day to discuss some projects Browning had in mind; when Appenzeller heard Browning’s idea for the book, he loved it.

“As we got up from lunch — I think it was in May of 2013 — Herb said, ‘Wilt, you can do this,’” Browning said.

Browning assembled some of the best writers the state had to offer to work on the project.

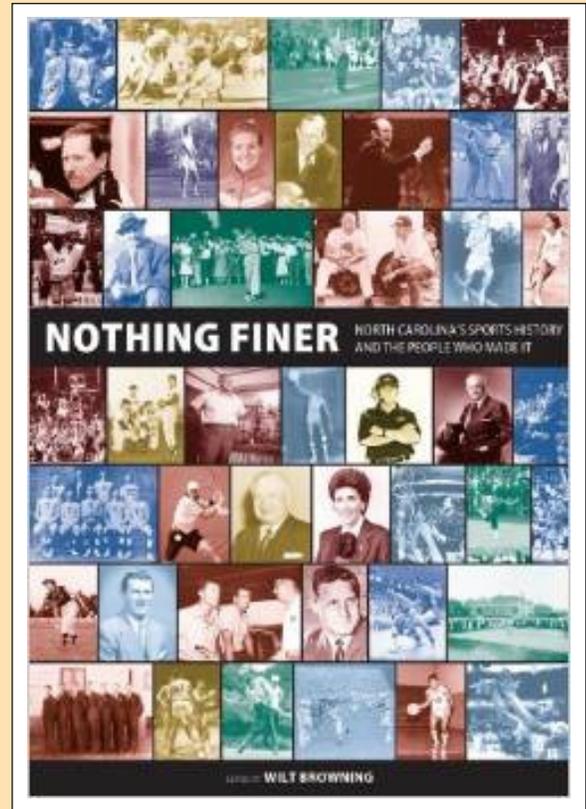


Lenox Rawlings, an award-winning columnist who retired from the Winston-Salem Journal, wrote about Junior Johnson’s rise to prominence in NASCAR and chronicled the Richard Petty family.

Larry Keech and Bill Haas, former writers with the News & Record, offered their insights about the diversity of sports in North Carolina. Haas’ research revealed that an incredible 178 team national championships have been won by colleges and universities in North Carolina.

The preface was written by Carlton Tudor, a former columnist with the Raleigh News & Observer. Tim Stevens, a longtime award-winning writer at the News & Observer, wrote about the legacy of high-school sports in the state.

Jim Sumner, a staff member of the North Carolina Museum of History and a freelance writer, wrote about the state’s passion for sports. Lee Pace, a freelance writer who has written several books on Pinehurst, detailed the rich history of golf in the state.



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Also contributing were Rob Daniels, an award-winning writer when he was with the Charlottesville Daily Progress and the News & Record, and Al Featherston, formerly of the Durham Herald-Sun, who probably knows as much about ACC basketball as anybody.

Browning proudly noted that the contributors to the book collectively have more than 300 years of watching and writing about sports in the state.

"The funny thing was when I first sent a draft in, there were 195,000 words and I knew that I would probably have to cut that down," Browning said. "But when Linda Lacy (a senior editor for Carolina Academy Press in Durham, which published the book) called me back, she said I didn't have to cut anything out and she thought it was fine."

The book had a soft release in May in conjunction with the latest class of the North Carolina Hall of Fame but it will hit bookshelves this month in time for possible Christmas gifts.