Sport reflects life and life reflects sport. Sport is not just about "the numbers;" it takes place in a social context and this context determines what the sport can achieve. For example, at the Rio Olympics, it was accepted, expected, and normal, that event categories are equally accessible to male and female athletes, and that all events are presented by the media with equal commitment and respect (and are received by the sport audience without gender bias). But in the history of sport, this gender indifference is only a recent phenomenon, as Amby Burfoot explains engagingly in his new book First Ladies of Running.

This book is a very well-written...