

Book Review: Liberti, Rita and Maureen Smith, *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015. ISBN: 9780815633846 (Paperback). 352 Pages \$39.95.

Reviewed by Earl Smith¹

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Wilma Glodean Rudolph (June 23, 1940 – November 12, 1994) was a superior track and field athlete whose reign coincided with the late 1950s-early 1960's modern civil rights movement. Born poor, two months premature, and weighing only four-and-a-half pounds in rural Tennessee—and later in high school given the nickname “Skeeter” because of her diminutive size—Rudolph rose to unreachable heights for someone so demure and non-assuming all her life.

(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph (Syracuse University Press, 2015) by academicians Rita Liberti and Maureen Smith moves along a trajectory a little different from the traditional sport biography. The text of this book is unlike the tome chronicling the life and times of the great “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias, Susan E. Cayleff’s *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias* (University of Illinois Press, 1996), or Koral’s young teen books from the early 1990s about the sprinter who replaces Rudolph as the “fastest woman in the world,” (Florence Griffith Joyner aka *Flo-Jo*). Authors Liberti and Smith write *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph* from a more critical perspective, discussing the range of memories that have been created to offer a more factual accounting of Rudolph and her rise to greatness.

Divided into seven chapters and having scavenged their way through newspaper columns, biopics, and children’s books on female athletes of the 1960’s, this work is indeed exceptional. Remembering that women athletes did not receive much coverage then and enjoyed little to no TV

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