Rachel Allison’s book, *Kicking Centre* is one of the most comprehensive books on women and sport to come out in recent years. Based on in-depth ethnographic work, including an eleven-month period ‘interning’ with one of the Women’s Professional Soccer teams (given the pseudonym of ‘Momentum’) in 2011 and interviewing players and a broad range of sport administrators.

Women have struggled and contested the historical dominance of men in sport for many years, and feminism is clearly an important issue. However, as Allison rightly notes, it is ‘most apt to speak in the plural of feminisms, given multiple models of the transformation of sport’ (14). Allison lists liberal feminism, postfeminism and third-wave feminism as central ‘waves’ to consider in her analysis of women’s professional soccer in the U.S (14-15). Bringing these three conceptualisations of feminism together enables her to make visible some of the core tensions in women’s sport, including the tension between gender equality and consumer/market driven ‘choice’.

Yet this tension, between ‘business and cause’ (as is the title of Chapter 2) has been articulated a number of times in the research. If I were to have a criticism of *Kicking Centre* it would be its reliance on relatively ‘old’ concepts (and literature) regarding gender, and its lack of attention to emerging feminisms, including poststructural feminisms and new materialist feminisms. This being said, the level of depth and detail and the organisation of what would have been a huge data set is admirable and the final product inherently valuable for both research and practice.

The Women’s Professional Soccer league that Allison was researching was suspended in 2012 and the work that she has done in *Kicking Centre* should be used as a key example of the complex issues that influence opportunities for women to play sport at competitive levels. Of the failures of a number of women’s professional sport leagues in the U.S., Allison (2018) notes,

> Each failure was interpreted in turn as a referendum on the (non)viability of women’s professional sports writ large…the ‘institutional core’ of professional sports remained firmly and intractably male dominated (6)

The data that Allison is using is from 2011/2012, and now, in 2018, we are witnessing a surge in the popularity and support for women’s sports around the world. *Kicking Gender* should form part of a growing canon of sport feminisms that can support the sustainability of women’s sport and the broader transformation of social and cultural norms related to women in sport.

The book is organised into four chapters (plus the introduction, conclusion and appendices). These chapters cover a huge terrain, including, Chapter 1 (Women’s Soccer in the United States), a historical account of the growth of youth and women’s soccer. She notes the ways soccer has been denigrated in American society as ‘feminine’ and ‘unAmerican’ and how these perceptions influenced the development of the sport. In part because of these associations, *women’s soccer* has not played ‘second fiddle to the men’s game’ but has instead ‘been central to the sport’s growing momentum’ (29).
Chapter 2, titled ‘Business or Cause’ delves into the management and organisational issues related to the development and day-to-day operations of women’s professional soccer. In this chapter Allison traces the two contrasting models she found for the development of the sport. First, was the ‘business model’ (75), a top-down approached focused on corporate sponsorship and outside entities adhered to by mostly men and a small group of women. The second model was the view of women’s professional soccer as a cause, with an emphasis on building its fan base.

Chapter 3, ‘We’re Taking Over’ focused on fans. This chapter, and the following (Chapter 4, ‘Image Politics and Media (in)Visibility’) both examine the inherently homophobic and racist basis of the strategies of the Women’s Professional League. These are important points to note as this league failed and it is insights such as this which new and struggling leagues should take note of.

This is an accessible book, useful to a broad audience, including sport administrators. Indeed, I would encourage and support those working in sport –including and perhaps especially men – to pick up this book and read it with an open mind. It is a great time to be involved in women’s sport (research). However, we cannot be complacent. Allison’s book is a stark reminder of the ongoing power struggles and challenges faced by women in sport/women’s sport.

ADELE PAVLIDIS
Griffith University
(759 words)