The NCAA and the Exploitation of College Profit-Athletes: An Amateurism That Never Was

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It is clear throughout the book that Pinsky is convinced of Scoutt’s guilt and himself describes his book as “the murder trial that Caroline Scoutt never had” (p. 353). Although fascinating and well researched, the book is therefore only one side of a very complicated story, with Scoutt now deceased and unable to defend herself against the accusations.

This book would be a valuable addition to the true crime section of a library and is compulsive reading for readers with an interest in family dynamics, criminal psychology, coercive control, and mental illness. It would also be of interest to students of Alabama local or criminal history. The author has worked as a journalist reporting murder cases for 40 years, writing for several publications, including the Los Angeles Times and The New York Times. Pinsky published his first non-fiction book, Met Her on the Mountain, in 2013 on the 1970 cold case murder of Nancy Morgan.

Layla Farrar, University of North Georgia

The NCAA and the Exploitation of College Profit-Athletes: An Amateurism That Never Was

Richard M. Southall, Mark S. Nagel, Ellen J. Staurowsky, Richard T. Karcher, & Joel G. Maxcy
Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2023
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354 p. $104.99 (Hbk)

Paying athletes has been at the forefront of discussions about college athletics in recent years. Should athletes be paid? Which athletes should be paid? What constitutes payment? These are all questions that colleges and sports fans have been asking. In The NCAA and the Exploitation of College Profit-Athletes, five authors attempt to answer these very questions.

While the book covers a wide variety of topics, including racism, player autonomy, and unionization, the overarching theme is that of amateurism versus professionalism. The history of amateurism, how the NCAA defines it, and how paying athletes affects the idea of amateurism are all central to the core thesis of this book: that profit-athletes (Power Five football and Division I basketball players), many of whom are Black, have been systematically exploited by the NCAA and its member institutions for more than a century.

The NCAA’s explanation of the term “amateur” is central to its treatment of college athletes: “Student-athletes shall be amateurs in an intercollegiate sport. ... Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises” (pp. 95-96). This characterization of what it means to be an amateur has long prevented NCAA athletes from earning money, while nonathletes are free to do so. The question of whether college athletes are amateurs or professionals has also impacted players’ unionization efforts. As far back as the 1930s, football players organized to improve conditions. The authors describe attempts to unionize throughout the 20th century and devote significant scrutiny to recent efforts by the Northwestern University football team.

Given the current discourse around paying college athletes, it may come as a surprise that this topic has been ongoing for over a century. The authors provide many examples of college athletes being paid even before the NCAA was founded in 1906, as well as throughout the 20th century. In the 1950s, this practice of paying college athletes led author William T. Foster to write:

Only childlike innocence or willful blindness need prevent American colleges from seeing that the rules which aim to maintain athletics on what is called an “amateur” basis, by forbidding players to receive pay in money, are worse than useless because, while failing to prevent men from playing for pay, they breed deceit and hypocrisy. (p. 180)

The authors provide examples of athletes being paid throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, noting that while not all college athletes were comfortable accepting payment, many expected it. After a 2021 Supreme Court vote in which the justices unanimously voted that schools could provide their athletes with education-related benefits, it became clear that those same justices might well support other monetary compensation for college athletes. Seeing the writing on the wall, the NCAA changed its century-old stance and an-
nounced its support of NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness). However, this did not affect the NCAA’s perception of amateurism or the paternalistic nature surrounding their policies on paying athletes, as explained in the last chapter:

What was—as recently as 2019—viewed as “exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises” from which college athletes must be protected ... was suddenly trumpeted by coaches as the newest iteration of approved compensation and indicative of their commitment to doing what was in their players’ best interest. (p. 300)

This book is divided into three parts: “College Athletes Have Always Been Paid,” “Legal and Economic Realities of Big-Time College Sports,” and “Power Five College Sports Today.” While this division provides a good topical outline, it is not always linear. That, combined with the fact that five authors contributed to this book, leads to some repetition of content among chapters.

The five authors, all university professors, do an excellent job at hammering home the message that college profit-athletes should be able to accept payment for their services. All content is well referenced, with pages of endnotes for each chapter. Written at a time when the century-old NCAA model of athletes as unpaid amateurs is changing, this book provides extremely timely content, as well as an excellent historical perspective about the long history of the NCAA and its treatment of college athletes. This decidedly pro-athlete book is highly recommended for all academic libraries, and in particular those with sport management, labor relations, and race relations programs.

Ariana Baker, Coastal Carolina University

Schooling the Movement: The Activism of Southern Black Educators from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Era

Derrick P. Aldrdge, Jon N. Hale, and Tondra L. Loder-Jackson, Eds.
Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2023
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Successfully filling a gap in the history of the African American civil rights struggle, Schooling the Movement traces the role and success of educators in advancement of justice and equality. While there are many books and articles addressing the use of litigation and direct-action protest, none, until now, have focused on the role of Black educators.

Schooling the Movement is an edited collection of 11 chapters (not counting the introduction and afterword) written by professors and a few doctoral candidates who explore and largely succeed in making the case that Black educators made significant contributions to the advancement of African American civil rights. Providing thorough treatment of the South, the book is divided into geographic coverage by chapter (North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Virginia, and Alabama), plus a look at W.E.B. Du Bois at the University of Berlin. Also included is Missouri, and—although not part of the Confederacy—the argument could be made that the state was definitely influenced by its Southern neighbors Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky (all three of which were slaveholding states at the time of the Civil War).

Although written by different authors, the accessible yet scholarly language used throughout this volume appears to be consistent, likely reflecting solid editing provided by the three editors, all of whom are currently university professors. The articles provide sometimes lengthy endnotes, and there is a useful selected bibliography and a helpful index. The latter two features, normally considered standard for scholarly works, are sometimes lacking in today’s publishing environment or must be accessed online at times.

The chapters primarily focus on the 20th