



College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth

Allen L. Sack, Ellen J. Staurowsky

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Many books have been written on the evils of commercialism in college sport, and the hypocrisy of payments to athletes from alumni and other sources outside the university. Almost no attention, however, has been given to the way that the National Collegiate Athletic Association has embraced professionalism through its athletic scholarship policy. Because of this gap in the historical record, the NCAA is often cast as an embattled defender of amateurism, rather than as the architect of a nationwide money-laundering scheme.

Sack and Staurowsky show that the NCAA formally abandoned amateurism in the 1950s and passed rules in subsequent years that literally transformed scholarship athletes into university employees. In addition, by purposefully fashioning an amateur mythology to mask the reality of this employer-employee relationship, the NCAA has done a disservice to student-athletes and to higher education. A major subtheme is that women, such as those who created the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), opposed this hypocrisy, but lacked the power to sustain an alternative model. After tracing the evolution of college athletes into professional entertainers, and the harmful effects it has caused, the authors propose an alternative approach that places college sport on a firm educational foundation and defend the rights of both male and female college athletes. This is a provocative analysis for anyone interested in college sports in America and its subversion of traditional educational and amateur principles.

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