

Fall 1999

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

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Repository Citation

John T. Wolohan, *Book Review: College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth*, 10 Marq. Sports L. J. 161 (1999)

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BOOK REVIEWS

COLLEGE ATHLETES FOR HIRE: THE EVOLUTION AND LEGACY OF THE NCAA'S AMATEUR MYTH

Allen L. Sack & Ellen J. Staurowsky

[Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers 1998]

xv/ 204 pages

ISBN: 0-275961915: \$29.95

In the past ten years there have been a number of books published on the subject of college athletics. The vast majority of these books concentrate solely on the abuses and excesses of those involved in college athletics. It is rare therefore to find a book that while critiquing the abuses also offers suggestions on how to correct these abuses and clean up college athletics. One such book is *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth*.

In *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth*, the authors, Allen Sack and Ellen Staurowsky, provide an insightful look into both the development of professionalism in college sports and the development of women's athletics in the NCAA. They also provide two suggestions they believe will end the exploitation of college athletes and restore the educational integrity to colleges involved in big time athletics. Sack and Staurowsky have done an excellent job in researching their subject and have written a book that is both easy to read and understand. Therefore, for anyone interested in the development of college athletics, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* is a must read.

College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth examines the evolution of college athletics from leisure activity into the current corporate model. By examining the evolution of college athletics, Sack and Staurowsky set out to shatter the myth that college athletes at the Division I level are amateurs. One part of the student athlete myth is that the athletes are students first and foremost. Sack and Staurowsky argue that the NCAA and Division I schools are more concerned with exploiting athletes financially rather than giving them an education. The authors argue that the myth that student athletes are amateurs which has been developed by the NCAA, has not only undermined the educational integrity of American universities, but has also transformed some of America's most prestigious universities into

centers of fraud. The authors' examination of college athletics in *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* is all the more interesting because of their own college athletic experiences. One of the authors played football at Notre Dame, where all his educational expenses, and those of the team, were paid by the athletic department. The other author played athletics at Ursinus College, where there were no athletic scholarships and she and team members had to contribute to their own travel costs. At the time, car pooling and sharing travel expenses was a common practice for all women's athletic teams, no matter what the size of the school. Besides their athletic experiences, both authors have served in administrative positions. Dr. Staurowsky was both a coach and Athletic Director at the Division III level, while Dr. Sack was the Director of the Center for Athletes Rights and Education.

College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth is divided into two sections. In the first section, which includes the first four chapters, Sack and Staurowsky examine how the NCAA and colleges have developed and used the myth of amateurism to exploit college athletes. The first two chapters of *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* examine the ideal of amateurism in college sports and how the NCAA's decision to allow freshman eligibility and athletic scholarships has fueled the growing professionalism in college sports. This section of the book also traces the historical, economic and political forces behind the NCAA's decision to allow colleges to offer athletic scholarships in 1956.

In the rest of the first section, chapters three and four, Sack and Staurowsky examine the Victorian and patriarchal values of the late 1800s that dominated higher education and how these values impacted the development of women's collegiate athletics. Particularly close attention is focused on the distinctive "sport-for-women philosophy." The cornerstone of this philosophy is that female athletes should be students first and athletes a distant second. Also highlighted by Sack and Staurowsky is the 1923 Platform of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation, which emphasized the academic needs of athletes. It is this emphasis on academics, the authors argue, that has suffered as women's athletic programs have become professional.

In the second half of the book, chapters five, six and seven, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* focuses on the professionalization of college sports. In particular, the book examines the impact the NCAA's decision to allow athletic

scholarships has had on the commercialization of college sports. Sack and Staurowsky argue that by allowing athletic scholarships in 1956 and then reducing the length of the scholarship from four years to one year in 1973 based on athletic contributions, the NCAA has transformed scholarship athletes into university employees. As university employees, Sack and Staurowsky argued that college athletes should also be eligible for workers' compensation. To support their position, Sack and Staurowsky examine several workers' compensation cases involving injured college athletes and the control the colleges had over these athletes.

The second part of *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* also examines the inherent conflicts in being both a student and an athlete at the Division I level. Some of the conflicts identified for college and universities include lowering entrance requirements and academic standards for student athletes. Student athletes, on the other hand, must deal with conflicts over the time demands involved in practice and school, and the power and control coaches and schools have over athletes via the athletic scholarship and their ability to withhold athletic scholarships. Because of these conflicts, Sack and Staurowsky argue that colleges are more concerned with the exploitation of scholarship athletes than with nurturing their academic potential, especially in the African-American community.

After examining these conflicts, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* then examines the issue of gender equity in college sports. Sack and Staurowsky begin their examination by reviewing the history of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). The AIAW controlled women's college athletes until the NCAA's at its 1980 Convention voted to begin offering championships for women. Besides the AIAW's struggle to gain equity for women without compromising academic principles, Sack and Staurowsky also examine the impact of Title IX has had on women's athletics. While Title IX has increased the opportunities available to women, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* points out that it has also lead to a growing professionalism in women's sport. This growing professionalism places the economic needs of the college athletic department, the university and the NCAA above the human and educational needs of students.

The final chapter of *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* concludes that the NCAA's amateur myth has no place in college athletics. While a number of recent books have also come to this conclusion, *College Athletes for Hire: The*

Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth is different from most of the other books that criticize the NCAA in that it also offers suggestions to remedy the problem. The first alternative proposed by Sack and Staurowsky is to actually "turn amateur." This model would take away freshman eligibility and remove athletic scholarships and just offer students need based financial aid. This model would also require athletes to meet the same admission and academic standard as the other students at the college. Sack and Staurowsky argue that these changes would deescalate the "arms race" in college sports and allow universities to once again gain control over their athletic departments. If colleges are unwilling to go amateur, the second model proposed by Sack and Staurowsky is for a relatively small group of schools to stop pretending scholarship athletes are amateurs and allow the athletes to "turn professional." By professional, this model does not mean allow students to join the NFL or NBA but to allow college athletes to cash in on their athletic ability by signing endorsement and other service contracts. These changes would place the athlete on the same level as college coaches and who allow the student to share in the revenue that he or she generates for the university.

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