

Big-time sports in American universities by Charles T. Clotfelter. Cambridge, 2011. 313p bibl index ISBN 9781107004344, \$29.00

Too often, authors who tackle college athletics are either unabashed boosters or critics. A respected economist, Clotfelter (Duke) is far more balanced in his approach and coverage. He focuses on and analyzes why rational universities--and students and alumni--commit so much of their time and resources to this seemingly peripheral aspect of campus life and institutional mission. This reviewer noted serious omissions: "corruption" and "scandal" are not in the index, nor is there any mention of the virtually daily accounts of player arrests and coach misbehaviors or of the now-famous Duke lacrosse saga. There is nothing on the inexorable bonds between collegiate football and (men's) basketball programs and their corresponding professional leagues. The coverage of the multidimensional racial aspects and exploitation of college athletes is scant. But the book does add immensely to the discussion and obliges readers to think about this uniquely American phenomenon. A 25-page appendix, 40 pages of chapter notes, and 10 pages each of references and index give the brief volume heft and an academic feel. This insightful, readable book will also serve readers both inside and outside the academy. Summing Up: Recommended. With reservations. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; professionals and public-policy officials; lay readers. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago