

Easterbrook, Gregg. The king of sports: football's impact on America. Thomas Dunne Books, 2013. 354p bibl index ISBN 9781250011718, \$25.99; ISBN 9781250012609 e-book, contact publisher for price

Written by a veteran contributing editor (The Atlantic), columnist (ESPN.com), and author (of eight books), The King of Sports is not "The King of Books about Football." Easterbrook's journalistic tendencies to stream facts, stake out subjective positions, and feign outrage too often detract from his narrative. A dozen largely self-contained chapters--somewhat dated, owing to the constant shifting landscape in college and professional football--are grouped by broad themes, covering familiar football turf: how facilities affect a community's economy; money and exploitation in college athletics; various important contemporary issues, including concussions, overweight gladiators, and cheating. In addition one finds chapters devoted to some catch-all "values" themes and a paean to Virginia Tech football and their coach, Frank Beamer. The last chapter, "The Future of Football," presents Easterbrook's Lutheresque theses to reform football; taken by themselves they represent an excellent set of initial "talking point" topics for discussion and debate. No tables or figures; the sources and index (in reality just a names list) are mediocre. The almost total absence of references to, and comparisons with, basketball and baseball is inexcusable. Summing Up: Optional. General readers and professionals only.