

Gaul, Gilbert M. Billion-dollar ball: a journey through the big-money culture of college football. Viking, 2015. 249p index ISBN 9780670016730, \$27.95; ISBN 9780698142916 ebook, \$13.99.

In *Billion-Dollar Ball* investigative reporter and Pulitzer Prize–winning author Gilbert Gaul tackles the subject of big-time college football. Given the plethora of athletic scandals and outrages on campuses in the 21st century, the subject is low-hanging fruit, but the author acquits himself nicely in indicting almost everyone mired in this modern-day, cottage-industry-turned-entertainment-complex swamp. Delving into the sordid details behind familiar headlines and jaw-dropping accounts, and offering comparisons across a wide range of colleges and universities, the seven chapters (bearing such enticing titles as "Why the South Lost the War but Wins at Football") provide a readable smackdown. The book's shortcomings are also evident. Reporters do what reporters do—rely on interviews and news accounts, without necessarily supplementing their narratives with information gleaned from more academic, reasoned perspectives—and this book includes neither footnotes nor biography. Thus the book is airplane and beach reading, not grist for scholars' mills. The addition of another 50–100 pages to include men's basketball in the mix would have easily passed a benefit-cost test. And treating the nexus of college football and the NFL would have been invaluable. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers and professionals.