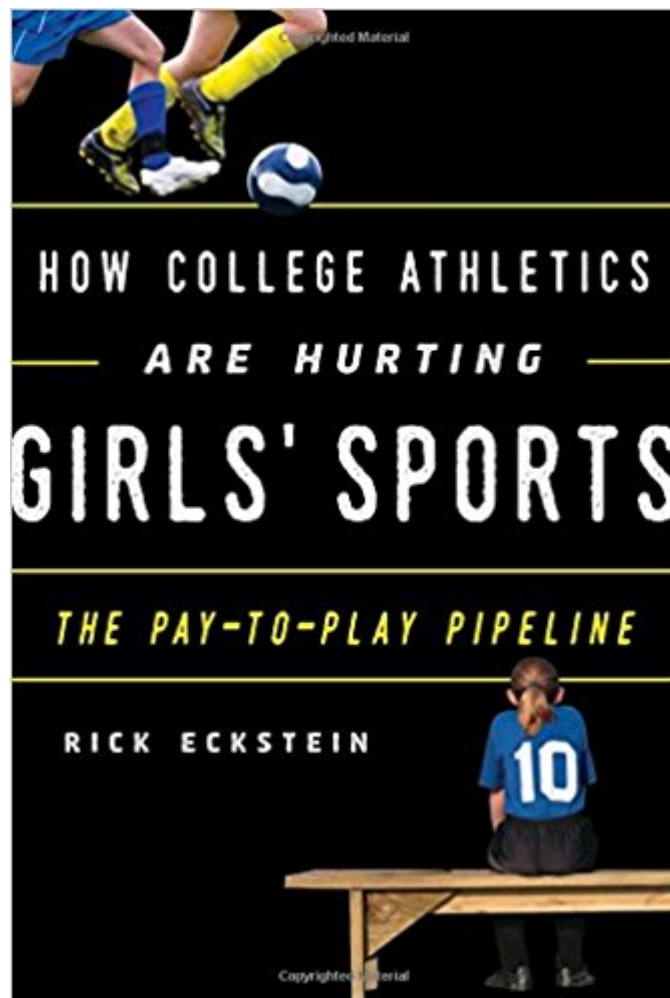




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How College Athletics Are Hurting Girls' Sports: The Pay-to-Play Pipeline



Synopsis

More girls are playing sports than ever beforeâwhich, on the surface, is great for girls because sports offer positive and empowering fun for young women. In reality, though, few young athletes report âfunâ as a reason they play sports. The rates of concussions and repetitive use injuries are on the rise, and kids are encouraged to specialize in a single sport at earlier and earlier ages, spending much of their free time throughout the year dedicated to the pursuit of a single sport at the expense of friends, other activities, and sometimes, health. Alarmed by the stories he heard from young athletes in his classes, sports scholar Rick Eckstein set out to investigate youth sportsâwhy young people are playing them, how they have changed over time, and their impact on kids and families. Through three years of extensive research, including surveys, interviews, and more, Eckstein discovered that college athletics are having an alarming impact on youth sports, particularly for girls. *How College Athletics Are Hurting Girls*; Sports looks closely at college sports and how they shape the athleticâand personalâlandscape for girls and young women. Filled with powerful interview excerpts from women athletes of all ages, as well as coaches, league officials, and others, the book chronicles how college and youth sports have become more commercialized, to the detriment of participants. The book looks at a range of sports, with case studies including soccer, field hockey, ice hockey, figure skating, and Ultimate Frisbee. The author celebrates sportsâ potential to have a positive impact on a girlâs life, but he recommends changes in how college and youth athletics are structured to improve the experience of young athletes and to give them their childhood back.

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Customer Reviews

The book is very readable[.] (Cincinnati Reds Blog)How College Athletics are Hurting Girlsâ™ Sports is a timely and important challenge to the popularly accepted wisdom that sports always benefit girls' development. Rick Eckstein shows how the single-minded pursuit of the "next level" in the commercialized youth-to-college sports pipeline often does harm that outlasts girlsâ™ time on the field. This book is a must-read for players of all ages, parents whose daughters play sports, and college sports coaches and administrators. (Rachel Allison, Mississippi State University)With the tenacity of an investigative journalist, Rick Eckstein uses the methods of sociology to collect data on the sport experiences of girls and young women in the United States. His analysis and insights make this a must-read for parents of daughters, athletic directors, school principals, university presidents, and coaches of youth, high school, and college sports. They provide a basis for making informed personal and policy decisions that will improve the health, happiness, and well-being of girls who choose to play organized sports. (Jay Coakley, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, author of Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies)Having coached on a prominent stage in both youth and collegiate soccer, I can clearly understand the concerns that are portrayed in Ecksteinâ™s book. I only wish I had this as a reference before I retired from the college ranks. I might have been more sensitive to each playerâ™s needs and trepidations. (Glenn Crooks, former head coach, Rutgers Women's Soccer)Eckstein takes a broad look at a contentious topicâ "how our love for playing a game becomes deeply embedded in structural quagmires well beyond our individual passions. Sociologically grounded, his ethnographic approach, data driven analysis, and provocative queries force us to ask questions that the increasingly commodified complex of higher education often prefers to side-step. How College Athletics Are Hurting Girls' Sports offers both depth and mainstream normalcy, but Ecksteinâ™s fundamental plea is at the base of a long history of girls and women in sportâ "validate the experiences of the female athlete, yet beware, exploitation isnâ™t far from the next level. (Jane M. Stangl, Smith College, past president of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport)Every youth sports organization should hand out this important book. Rick Eckstein identifies and goes deep into important issues, with parents thinking college scholarships are some holy grail, while the fun gets sucked right out of the game at a young age. He shows that the dollars don't even add up, with youth sports usually costing more than most scholarships provide. (Mike Jensen, Philadelphia Inquirer)

Rick Eckstein is professor of sociology at Villanova University and the author of *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums* and *Nuclear Power and Social Power*. His research on sports is cited widely in media such as the New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, Philadelphia Inquirer, and many others. He has received awards for both his teaching and his writing. He was a volunteer youth sports coach for over fifteen years.

Eckstein has previously co-written a book titled *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums*, about using taxpayer monies to fund athletic facilities for professional teams. This book is about another key issue in sports and finance. This book is both a scholarly exercise and a personal look, as Eckstein is a researcher and also a father and youth sports coach. While he concentrates in this volume on girls' sports, the issues also have implications for boys. In reading it I was often reminded of Jeff Passan's recent book *The Arm*, about baseball pitcher injuries occurring earlier and earlier, and affecting many youngsters. A common theme in both books is the prevalence of so-called travel teams, and the dangers of concentrating on one sport year-round resulting in overuse injuries. The book is very readable though the reader should be aware this is a scholarly treatment. It is based on research, much of it Eckstein's own research, and tends to pound on a point more than a "popular" tome would. That's all right, because there is an important point to pound here; the influence of for-profit sports organizations and retailers selling a product to get children and their parents to buy into a notion that they can earn scholarships to colleges through sports. Never mind that these families are already well off, could easily afford the college tuition, and spend more on these travel teams than they would just paying the tuition even if they do manage to get a scholarship. Eckstein concentrates on five sports; soccer, field hockey, ice hockey, figure skating, and ultimate frisbee. They each have different professional possibilities, different college opportunities, and different places in society. There are themes common to all and individual to each. Eckstein has spent a lot of time preparing his material, going to conferences and meetings for each sport and interviewing girls and parents as well as coaches and officials in each. The interview quotes from those involved are the most compelling part of the book. The selling tactics used, what people have learned, and what they choose to ignore is often very telling. I never had a child with aspirations of playing a sport in the pros or in college, but if I had I would have wanted to read this book first. Eckstein devotes a chapter to each of several aspects of the issue, then a final chapter with some ideas for reform, many of them quite earth-shaking to our present way of doing things. Perhaps the way we do things could use some shaking.

Amazing and insightful book that should be read by all parents.

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