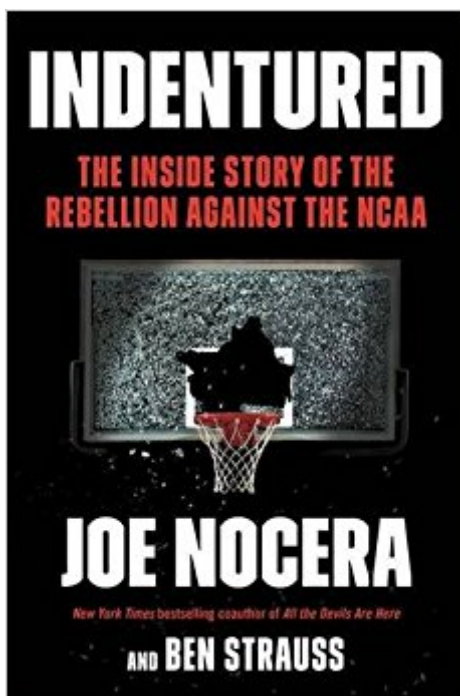


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# Indentured: The Inside Story Of The Rebellion Against The NCAA



## Synopsis

How can the NCAA blithely wreck careers without regard to due process or common fairness? How can it act so ruthlessly to enforce rules that are so petty? Why won't anybody stand up to these outrageous violations of American values and American justice? In the four years since Joe Nocera asked those questions in a controversial New York Times column, the National Collegiate Athletic Association has come under fire. Fans have begun to realize that the athletes involved in the two biggest college sports, men's basketball and football, are little more than indentured servants. Millions of teenagers accept scholarships to chase their dreams of fame and fortune at the price of absolute submission to the whims of an organization that puts their interests dead last. For about 5 percent of top-division players, college ends with a golden ticket to the NFL or the NBA. But what about the overwhelming majority who never turn pro? They don't earn a dime from the estimated \$13 billion generated annually by college sports—an ocean of cash that enriches schools, conferences, coaches, TV networks, and apparel companies . . . everyone except those who give their blood and sweat to entertain the fans. *Indentured* tells the dramatic story of a loose-knit group of rebels who decided to fight the hypocrisy of the NCAA, which blathers endlessly about the purity of its student-athletes while exploiting many of them: The ones who get injured and drop out because their scholarships have been revoked. The ones who will neither graduate nor go pro. The ones who live in terror of accidentally violating some obscure rule in the four-hundred-page NCAA rulebook. Joe Nocera and Ben Strauss take us into the inner circle of the NCAA's fiercest enemies. You'll meet, among others . . . Sonny Vaccaro, the charismatic sports marketer who convinced Nike to sign Michael Jordan. Disgusted by how the NCAA treated athletes, Vaccaro used his intimate knowledge of its secrets to blow the whistle in a major legal case. Ed O'Bannon, the former UCLA basketball star who realized, years after leaving college, that the NCAA was profiting from a video game using his image. His lawsuit led to an unprecedented antitrust ruling. Ramogi Huma, the founder of the National College Players Association, who dared to think that college players should have the same collective bargaining rights as other Americans. Andy Schwarz, the controversial economist who looked behind the façade of the NCAA and saw it for what it is: a cartel that violates our core values of free enterprise. *Indentured* reveals how these and other renegades, working sometimes in concert and sometimes alone, are fighting for justice in the bare-knuckles world of college sports.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Impeccably reported and written, this book puts a bullet in the heart of the country's most morally corrupt institution and will help liberate the thousands who are truly indentured. "Buzz Bissinger, author of Friday Night Lights" "This relentlessly researched, one-stop-shop exposé proves that the NCAA is a hopeless failure posing as the steward of American college athletics." "Frank Deford, Sports Illustrated" "A searing indictment of the power and exploitation at the heart of big-money college athletics.... A clarion call for anyone who believes that hard-working people deserve fairness, respect, and a level playing field." "Senator Cory Booker" "This book pulls back the covers on the lives that get chewed up by college sports. It's beautifully written and compelling." "Charles DuHigg, author of The Power of Habit" "Shocking and stunning." Two of the nation's finest newspaper writers have delivered an absolute masterpiece. "Paul Finebaum, ESPN" "Painstakingly reported and deftly written, Indentured shines the brightest light yet on the hypocrisy and injustice perpetrated by the NCAA." "George Dohrmann, author of Play Their Hearts Out" "I think it should be required reading for all sports fans." "Kareem Abdul-Jabbar" "When I was in college, I felt like an indentured servant, exploited and controlled by all the people who were getting rich off my labors and my talent." This book is not only a must-read for college athletes and fans, but a call to action. "Arian Foster, Houston Texans running back" "Joe Nocera and Ben Strauss have long recognized the widespread corruption that plagues big time college sports. These are issues that go beyond the sports pages." "Bob Costas

Joe Nocera is a columnist for the New York Times. His previous books include *All the Devils Are Here* (with Bethany McLean), *Good Guys and Bad Guys*, and *A Piece of the Action*. During his long career in journalism he has won three Gerald Loeb Awards and was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. He lives in New York City. Ben Strauss is a contributing writer for The New York Times, where he has written extensively about the changing face of college sports. Previously, he worked on Capitol Hill. He lives in Washington, D.C.

In today's world we go from headline, to sound-bite, to assumption, and then we form an unchangeable opinion. "Indentured" brings us a dose of reality. The story of how the NCAA exerts tyranny over the college athletics, strips student athletes of rights that every other person in America has and holds them hostages to their dreams cannot be told in a tweet, a post, a blog, or even a 20-minute expose on 60 minutes. Such a complex topic requires a book...THIS BOOK. The narrative masterfully interweaves real human outcomes into the history and policy of the NCAA institution. Compelling and provocative topics are handled with great craft. Let me be up front. The author has a bias, and this book is an attempt to persuade. And guess what? It does. It's not that hard as he often looks no further than an NCAA report or an NCAA official's own words and statements to convince us. We're constantly bombarded with news of scandal, probation, and fines as a result of endless violations of NCAA rules. If you're like me, your first instinct is to roll your eyes and assume the problem is that players and parents are greedy, unscrupulous coaches are crooked cheaters, and over-the-top boosters are handing keys to little red corvettes to top college recruits. While there may be cases in which these assumptions are true, this book should give you pause to ask, "What exactly was the rule that was broken?" Or even more profound questions, "Who the hell gave the NCAA the right to supersede the US constitution? Why is the NCAA the only institution in the whole country that denies the right for an individual to have a job? What the hell is going on here? Why do we allow the abuse of power to grow? Read this book and maybe you won't be so quick to judge and assume that, "Those punks and cheaters deserve all the wrath that comes to them." Maybe, when you hear of an NCAA scandal, your first thought ought to be, "Is there something wrong with the NCAA?" This story deserved to be told in an interesting way with a human side, and with all the financials and motives laid out on the table. And this book does that. Indentured opened my eyes. The business of college athletics is a high stake poker game and Joe Nocera has a hand full of Aces and just called the NCAA's bluff. The most compelling work of non-fiction I've read since *One Way Ticket to Anywhere*

Joe Nocera and Ben Strauss have written a book that should be on the "must-read" list of anyone with an interest in college sports. With extraordinary research into virtually all of the ways that the NCAA has exploited its athletes (I found only one glaring mistake, relegating the lineman from 'The Blind Side' to attending Mississippi State rather than Ole Miss), this book aims a strong spotlight into the multitude of shadowy places from where the NCAA has operated throughout its history. As a sport educator who has preached for years that the NCAA rivals the most corrupt organizations ever established on Earth, I appreciate that Nocera and Strauss have gathered all the evidence I'll ever need into one tidy volume. They join Taylor Branch, Jon Solomon, Andy Schwarz, Dan Rascher, Sonny Vaccaro, Andy Staples, and Ramogi Huma on the ever-more-crowded Mt. Rushmore of knowledgeable NCAA critics (even outlining many of their stories). Read this book, put a picture of NCAA President Mark Emmert on the nearest dartboard, and hurl away with pleasure.

For decades I have strongly surmised or guessed at the many sins of the NCAA and big time college sports in general. Add to that major American professional sports. This book confirms beyond my wildest suspicions the worst aspects of amateur sports. Start with the word "amateur" being a misnomer. End with the sober realization that the NCAA is an immoral, illegal, self-righteous, and criminal enterprise with especially harsh penalties for Black male athletes compared to all other racial and gender classifications. It's bitterly ironic, then, that Black male athletes are the most dominant and valued commodities in undergirding and promoting this entire profit-mongering system. And to think, if not for sustained ignorance and lack of political consciousness, they could be controlling the levers of this smug, multibillion dollar industry. But that's my opinion.

Congratulations to Messrs. Nocera and Strauss, who deserved to be a co-author, on this fantastic, great read, chronicle of the history of the NCAA from Walter Byers to Mark Emmert. This work is the bible of the workings of an Association and its various members on an unstoppable road to commercialization using the skills of college youth, those to whom are alluded in the title. The cast of hundreds of characters is complete, no holds barred! It's a must read for all who are interested in the trajectory of college amateur student-athlete sports. Couldn't set it down once started! One take away was the proliferation of court cases, seemingly uncountable, brought against the NCAA and its carefully devised litany of rules. Pity authors didn't publish a census of their numbers over

the years, apparently in the hundreds. Although mention was made more than once that the NFL and NBA use intercollegiate college sports as their "minor leagues," I wish they had drawn even more similarities to that and their mention of how MLB drafts high school athletes, who can refuse such offers, accepting scholarship offers instead without loss of amateur status. In my novel, "The One-Day Weekend: College Football Goes Professional," I suggest a means to remunerate college athletes through such an early draft requiring the collaboration of the NCAA and the NFL. I believe this to be a viable and sustainable option which I missed in "Indentured!"

Excellent and well document critique of the NCAA and its indefensible practices regarding college athletes -- denial of due process, and ridiculous and I believe unlawful limitations on the ability of athletes in Div I basketball and football to earn money for the "work", and that's what it is, at a minimum to be placed in a trust fund after they graduate. The author is a great story teller and this story very much needs telling.

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