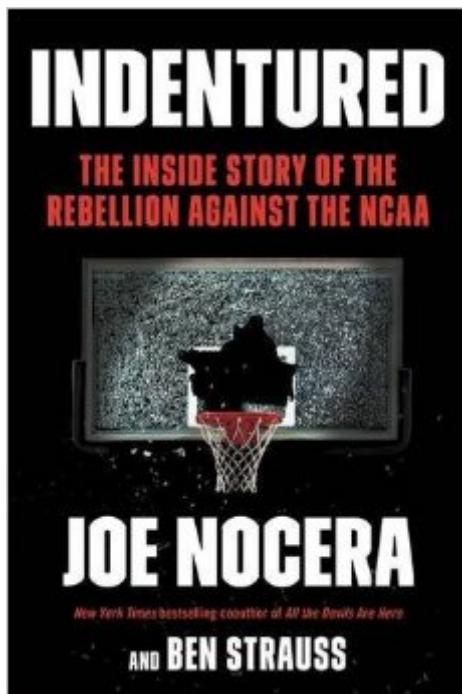


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# Indentured: The Inside Story Of The Rebellion Against The NCAA



## 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student-athletes while exploiting many of them: The ones who get injured and drop out because their scholarships have been revoked.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 facade 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**

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 exposé 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?"

I have to disagree a little with the other reviewers and the blurbs listed by the publisher. This is not

really an indictment of the NCAA as much as an explanation of how big-money college sports evolved. The book does document plenty of bad things done by the NCAA along the way, but there aren't many clean hands in the story, nor is there an alternative that is obviously better. Moreover, the NCAA changed along the way, as much as college sports did. It started as basically a coordinating organization for athletic directors, as the money stakes increased it became a for-profit negotiating entity (de facto, not de jure) that lost out in competition to powerful conference commissioners and even individual schools like Notre Dame and Penn State. At that point it was taken over by university presidents. Through all of this, outcomes are shaped at least as much by changing television economics, marketing tie-ins, social changes and lawsuits as by any decisions made by NCAA administrators. There is only one way to tell this story, and it's to tell dozens of individual stories from the 1950s to late 2015. That makes this book fun to read, even if you care little about the overarching argument. You see major college football and men's basketball from the standpoint of players, coaches, universities, marketers, economists, lawyers, union organizers; pretty much everyone except the fans. The book does document many abuses perpetrated by the NCAA, but not all student athletes are subject to all of them. For example, depriving players of the right to profit from their own images causes major economic losses only to the most prominent athletes. They are not the ones suffering from having scholarships pulled at the whim of a coach.

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