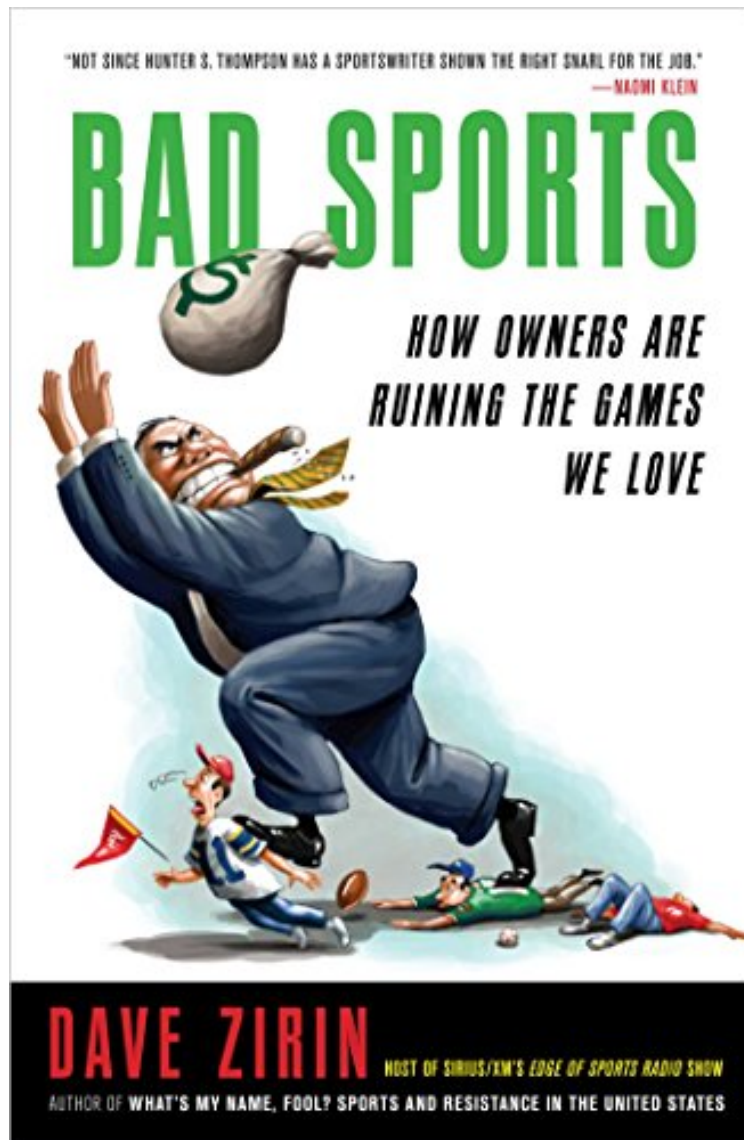


Bad Sports: How Owners Are Ruining the Games We Love

Dave Zirin

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Dave Zirin : Bad Sports: How Owners Are Ruining the Games We Love before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bad Sports: How Owners Are Ruining the Games We Love:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Owners Gone WildBy Roger D. LauniusI have enjoyed Dave Zirin's columns for "The Nation" for years, but his books I find even more useful. They serve as an important antidote to the nostalgia and saccharine life lessons that are so much a part of sports writing in the United States. He brings a liberal slant to the story and offers a useful corrective to the conservative ideology expressed by much of the sports journalism establishment. His earlier books took on the labor system, athletic activism, and the like. "Bad Sports" is an

outstanding muckraking book that filets the owners who are intent on taking our money in publicly-funded stadium deals and giving us less than their best in return. It might appropriately have been titled "Owners Gone Wild." No professional league is left standing in this solid journalistic account of modern sports franchises and their owners. All of the major team sports in the U.S.--MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL--and soccer in the U.K. are skewered by Zirin's prose. He singles out for abuse--or perhaps they singled themselves out with their ridiculous behavior--such owners as George Steinbrenner, Peter Angelos, Charlie Monfort, David Glass, and Bud Selig in MLB; Clay Bennett, James Dolan, Dick DeVos, and Donald Sterling of the NBA; Dan Snyder and others in the NFL; and Tom Hicks who bought the Liverpool FC soccer club but also owns the MLB Texas Rangers and the Dallas Stars of the NHL. What do all of these people, as well as others profiled in the book, have in common? They all own professional sports franchises, they all take taxpayers' dollars in the form of stadiums and other types of transfer payments, they all seek to control everything about the world around them including bullying players and other employees, and they all put on the field less skillful teams than should by rights be expected. Case in point, David Glass owns the Kansas City Royals, a franchise created in 1969 with Ewing Kauffman as owner and within less than a decade was a contender every year in the American League West, winning division titles in 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1984, the AL pennant in 1980, and the World Series in 1985. Once Glass took over, however, the team has endured losing seasons every year since 1995 with Glass pocketing the luxury tax rather than investing in the team. This type of activity is repeated many other places. Zirin has the goods on lots of owners and their shenanigans. For sheer outrageousness, he narrates the story of Donald Sterling and the LA Clippers, a woeful team that has been pillaged by Sterling for decades. The team has the worst record of any NBA franchise since Sterling bought it in 1981, a distinction that prompted writers at ESPN.com to name him the "nation's worst owner" in a field with many contenders, while "Sports Illustrated" named the Clippers "the worst franchise in professional sports." OK, so Zirin chronicles the horror stories of owners behaving badly, and that is interesting, entertaining, and innervating but I have to ask what we might take away from this book? There are three major messages that I got from reading "Bad Sports." First, as Zirin writes, "we need to make demands about how we expect our teams to be run" (p. 181). He believes we have every right to make demands on the owners since we who live in cities where they exist help pay for their upkeep through our tax dollars for stadiums and infrastructure. We can debate whether or not the public should be subsidizing the activities of billionaires, but since we are Zirin believes we should have a say in what happens with the team. "We should have the right to withhold tax money for a stadium unless a public advocate is added to a team's board of directors" (p. 181), writes Zirin. A whole series of other rights should flow from that. Zirin even goes so far as to argue that a municipally-owned team such as the Green Bay Packers should be the norm rather than the exception in all of these sports activities. He recognizes that these leagues will never allow this unless they are on the verge of collapse but this should become a long-term objective. The second message that Zirin makes clear is that the greater the socialism present in the sports league the greater the success of the league overall. The most socialistic, because of its revenue sharing, is the NFL. This has allowed a team like the Green Bay Packers to be successful even though they play in the smallest market in the U.S. with a major sports franchise. And parity is good for the fans and the leagues. MLB has also advanced in its socialistic agenda with much greater revenue sharing in the last decade. The result has been the greatest era of parity among the teams than ever before in the history of the baseball. Finally, with owners behaving so badly, why is there such a poor effort to discipline them. There are constant calls for the players to comport themselves with dignity and honor. And they receive punishment when they violate those rules. Fair enough, but it's not just players who get into trouble. Where is the same discipline when it comes to owners? And it's not just individual misbehavior, there are conspiracies for which they should be brought to account. The most striking example in the last twenty years has been the conspiracy from top to bottom in MLB concerning the use of performance enhancing drugs. Of course, the players deserve punishment whenever they cheated or broke the law. But where were the owners, the general managers, the managers, the clubhouse people, the trainers, etc. who were a part of the MLB establishment? Why did they take no action whatsoever even after it had become obvious to everyone, and that happened at least by the time that Ken Caminiti came out about the abuse of steroids in 2002? I don't think there is any doubt; they turned a blind eye to this issue. Among all of the other rotten things that MLB owners have done--and as the co-author of a biography of Oakland A's owner Charlie Finley, I've chronicled a lot of those rotten things--the steroids conspiracy ranks as one of the top two most unconscionable collective actions by owners in the history of the sport. The other was the top to bottom conspiracy to ban African American players from the MLB for more than 70 years. "Bad Sports" is a fascinating book. It is a work of journalism, muckraking journalism to be sure, and not a work of history. It should, and I'm sure it will, raise your ire. That's its purpose. Sports writers like Zirin serve an important purpose. I wish there were more like him. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. You'll Never Vote for a Bond Issue to Build a Stadium By Samantha Marie This was an easy read, with a lot of humor. This is not just a book for men or superfans. The title says it all. Fans suffer at the hands of greedy owners. No surprise, as you know if you've ever thought about attending a professional sporting event, and decided to buy groceries instead. The author looked at extreme cases, but still, billionaires extorting money from city coffers to build a new stadium is no laughing matter. Teams are no longer part of the fabric of the city in which they play. The book gives a good overview of the economics involved. It also

covers familiar territory, like the owners who drive their teams into the ground because they think that making or inheriting a fortune in private industry equals brilliant management on the field. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Oh, so you don't understand how big money and bad people have ruined sports? Read this....By ilikepcsI purchased this for my son and read it after he did. We basically came to the same conclusion...what we loved and thought was good sports is really Bad Sports. The book details a lot of what we already know topically. And it can be somewhat painful for those of us who played and love athletic activities. A clearer layout of how we make big investments in sports teams and the return is never quite what is expected. Big money rules, big money can and will take advantage. And if you don't have big money, just shut up.

A THOUGHT-PROVOKING LOOK AT THE BIG BUSINESS AND IMMORAL PRACTICES BEHIND PROFESSIONAL SPORTS BY ACCLAIMED SPORTSWRITER DAVE ZIRIN, HAILED AS THE "CONSCIENCE OF AMERICAN SPORTSWRITING" (THE WASHINGTON POST)The fastest-growing sector of today's sports audience is the alienated fan. Complaints abound: from inflated ticket prices, \$6 hot dogs, and \$9 beers to owners endlessly demanding new multimillion-dollar stadiums funded by public tax dollars. Those sitting in the owners' boxes are increasingly placing profit over players' performances and fan loyalty. Bad Sports cuts through the hype and bombast to zero in on tales of abusive, dictatorial owners who move their teams thousands of miles away from their fan base, use their stadiums as religious and political platforms, or hold communities ransom for millions of dollars of taxpayer money to fund their gargantuan stadiums. As the multibillion-dollar sports-industrial complex continues to lumber along, Dave Zirin is the voice in the wilderness, speaking out for the common fan with a tough, passionate, and intelligent voice that will remind readers that there is more to sportswriting than glowing athlete profiles. nbsp;