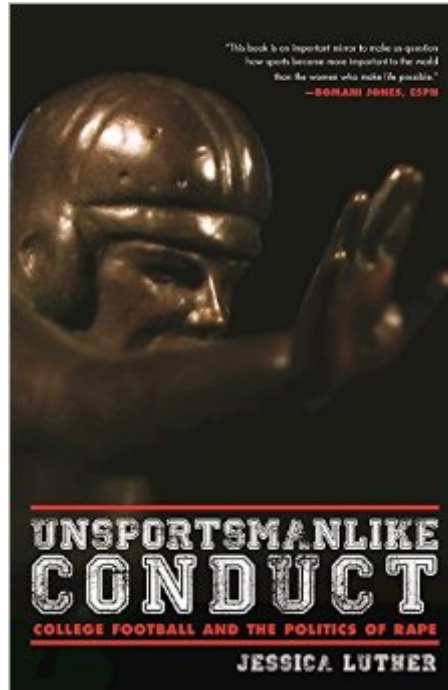


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Unsportsmanlike Conduct: College Football And The Politics Of Rape



Synopsis

"Of all the many problems facing college football, the most severe by far is the shocking number of rape cases involving athletes. And, as Luther makes abundantly clear in this impeccably researched volume, those numbers are only the tip of the iceberg, thanks to the contagion of cover-ups instigated by coaches and university officials, often with the support of police . . . Most important, Luther devotes part two of her book to changing the playbook, offering specific suggestions like 'fire people' and 'hire women' that throw down a gauntlet to those in power. Unsportsmanlike Conduct is not always easy to read; the text necessarily relies on numerous statistics and detailed summaries of court cases; but, nevertheless, it is almost certainly the most important sports book of the year."--Booklist, Starred Review "Highly relevant, hard-hitting, much-needed information that reveals the widespread existence of rape by sports players on college campuses."--Kirkus Reviews "Included in This Fall's Most Anticipated Nonfiction"-- Kirkus Reviews #147; [Luther] knows too much — about how teams, like her own, fail to adequately handle allegations of rape and sexual assault. It's hard for her to reconcile that with blindly supporting a team as a fan. So she literally wrote the book on the topic. Her book is one of two playbooks — the first describes how college football programs and the sports media currently respond to allegations like this, and the second gives suggestions of how teams, schools, media and the NCAA could respond to them better, with genuine compassion for survivors and an actual understanding of the life-changing effects of such violence.â •— USA Today Sports/Football Four Podcast

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Customer Reviews

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: College Football and the Politics of Rape is one of the most thorough and thoughtful books I have ever read. The relationship between violence, specifically against women, and sports, especially football, has never been more in the news and discussed than it has in the last few years. However, often it is discussed and that is it. No real change is made, or even suggested. The systems that protect those who commit violence remain unexamined, and those who profit from these systems continue to live their lives as if there is nothing wrong. In *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*, Jessica Luther takes a stand to change all of that. Luther uses her journalistic skills to examine the relationship between college football and sexual assault. She uses cases going back to the 1970s to illustrate various aspects of this relationship. After a detailed introduction that defines terms and sets the stage for the conversation, the book is split into two halves. The first half examines "the playbook" as it stands. The playbook is how teams, universities, the NCAA, the media, and fans have responded to allegations of sexual assault against players in the past, and for the most part, how they continue to respond. Each institution is culpable in perpetuating systems that shame victims and go out of the way to protect perpetrators of violence. The second half of the book offers thirteen suggestions to change the playbook as it stands. I appreciate that Luther tackles such an important topic. She doesn't shy away from difficult subjects that most would rather avoid. I also really like that she offers potential solutions, and doesn't just point out problems. She admits her own struggle in dealing with sexual assault allegations as a lifelong college football fan.

I have been waiting for months for this book to come out, and it was everything I hoped it would be. I felt like I had been hit in the gut reading some passages. I found myself nodding emphatically in agreement, wanting to cry, wanting to yell in anger, wanting to get up and do something. I highlighted so many passages, and am going to be passing this off for friends to read-- I wish everyone could read this. Jessica Luther is excellent at research, and it really shows. The stories and statistics give a very clear picture of this problem, in a way that doesn't allow you to explain anything away or make excuses. She holds everyone accountable, from the actual perpetrators of the crime, to the coaches and athletic departments, Title IX offices, police, and media. The look into the "playbook" for handling sexual assault as it exists now is incredibly thorough. The solutions she offers seem to pretty much be common sense, but, sadly, would be almost radical if put into play. I like that she offered a solution for every problem she addressed in the first part, from the big to those that seem small and inconsequential, such as locker room talk. As a woman who loves sports more than anything, but hates the way it treats women, making me feel unwelcome and unvalued

and even sometimes like it sees me as less than human, I enjoyed reading this from the perspective of a woman who loves sports just as much as I do, and hates this insidious part of it like I do. I like that she addressed how she wishes she could compartmentalize and keep her knowledge out of her mind while she enjoys football, but she can't-- I feel the same way.

I think that Jessica Luther has a lot of guts to write this book, UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: COLLEGE FOOTBALL AND THE POLITICS OF RAPE. (As does the publisher, Akashic Books.) The book dramatically "goes after" college football and the NFL; the NCAA; college personnel at all levels, including students and alumni; the media; campus security personnel and their "playbooks" (or lack thereof); local law enforcement; pampered, spoiled, often violent so-called "student" athletes; and let's not forget recruiting "hostess" programs. The writing is not so much punitive as factual, informative and an attempt to offer alternatives in the areas of sexual harassment and assault. The format is a crisp, organized one. Ms. Luther is a big football fan (or used to be) and models her book after a football "Playbook". There is a Table of Contents; an Editor's Foreword; and Introduction (entitled The Playbook); Part I - The Playbook as it is - with 5 chapters and Part II - How It Could Be - with 13 "plays" or chapters; a Conclusion - Change is Possible and exhaustive endnotes. This is a book about football and sexual violence. Some passages are difficult to read. My reactions ran the gamut from outrage and disgust to anger and sorrow. Some of the most damning passages are related to the NCAA organization. Rich, white, male and powerful - it is the devil we know. Its #1 Play is "The Shrug". Its #1 Move is "Ignore It". But move over NCAA - the media, college personnel at every level, athletes themselves, fans, alumni, law enforcement - there is plenty of blame to toss around. There is also an opportunity to adopt a different Playbook with 13 different steps - all remarkably common sense and doable.

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