

McCallum, John D., *College Basketball, U.S.A. Since 1892*. New York: Stein and Day, 1978. Pp. 308. Index, records, pictures. \$18.95.; *Big Ten*

Football Since 1895. Radnor, Pa: Chilton Book Company, 1976. Pp. 318. Index, records, standings, all-Americans, pictures. \$18.95.; *Ivy League Football Since 1872*. New York: Stein and Day, 1977. Pp. xiv. 320. Index, records, year by year game scores, all-time standings, all-Ivy League teams, Hall of Fame players and coaches, pictures. \$17.95.

There is a tradition among sport journalists to capitalize upon their interest and knowledge of popular sports by attempting to write both biographies and histories. Even if the volumes are artistically pleasing and financially successful, they generally fail as scholarly enterprises. One can note ready examples such as Wells Twombly's *200 Years of Sport in America* (1976); John Kieran, Arthur Daley, and Pat Jordan's *The Story of the Olympic Games* (1977); Myron Cope's *The Game That Was* (1974); and John Arlott and Arthur Daley's *Pageantry of Sport: From the Age of Chivalry to the Age of Victoria* (1968). Three volumes of John McCallum, *College Basketball, U.S. A. Since 1892*; *Big Ten Football Since 1895*; and *Ivy League Football Since 1872*, join the list of coffee table decorations.

The historical writing of journalist McCallum is not intended for those interested in sport history—rather McCallum likely sees his audience being primarily the rabid sports fan who lives and dies college basketball or Big Ten or Ivy League football. The reader will learn little new about why college basketball grew, how the Big Ten once dominated intercollegiate football, or how Ivy League football went from the pinnacle of the collegiate football scene to somewhere near the bottom in two generations. It is unfortunate for the sport historian that McCallum's knowledge of sports (which is formidable) is intended for commercial gain at the expense of enlightenment.

None of the three volumes has a theme or thesis. Star players, successful coaches, and winning teams are emphasized. Important considerations such as the manifestation of excessive emphasis upon winning, the stress upon recruiting, the hiring of professional coaches, or the impact of commercialization through radio and television are sorely lacking. For instance, in his *Big Ten Football*, McCallum provides no insight into Michigan being dropped from the Big Ten in 1907 (p. 16), the suspension of Iowa in 1930 (p. 48), the abolishment of football at Chicago, or the national intercollegiate scandal of 1951 (p. 98). In his *Ivy League Football*, there is no discussion of the 1905-06 or 1909-10 football crises, the 1926 Harvard-Princeton break in athletic relations, or the 1950s decision to deemphasize football. To his credit, McCallum does discuss the 1951 and 1961 fixing episodes in his *College Basketball, U.S.A.* Nowhere does he show how events and forces influenced the direction taken by college sport.

McCallum is at his best retelling exciting games or seasons, though he does

not show the significance of those events. He has, for example, retold the 1922 Princeton-Chicago football game in both football books:

Bill Roper turned his eyes away from the field. Behind the big Maroon line John Thomas crouched for the plunge that meant victory or defeat. His sweat-stained face was haggard, the corners of his mouth were drawn in a scowl. . . . For a heart-stopping second it seemed as if Thomas' leather helmet projected across the line. Then he collapsed in a welter of black and orange—a few scant inches from the whitewashed stripe. (*Big Ten Football*, p. 32.)

Another of his stories, “Legend of Carr Creek,” graces *College Basketball, U.S.A.* The account of a 1928 Kentucky high school team makes good reading, but it has little to do with college basketball. (pp. 45-46) Unfortunately there is too little good writing, and it is difficult to differentiate fact from fiction in each of his works.

The most distressing of his three books is his volume on Ivy League football. Like the others it contains no footnotes or bibliography and is replete with unsubstantiated and questionable facts. Equally disturbing is his lack of adequate discussion of important episodes in Ivy League history. As crucial as the Ivy League institutions were to the creation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1905-06, it is discomfiting to find no analysis of this period. Similarly, there is no adequate explanation why the Ivy League deemphasized football in the 1950s. Was the decision to deemphasize football a move toward “purity” after three generations of leadership in the professionalization and commercialization of college athletics? Had the institutional presidents taken this action because the Ivy League was being embarrassed and could no longer compete successfully with non-eastern teams? Was the Ivy League showing both leadership and righteousness in athletics as it had done in the past? McCallum would probably cast his lot with the latter for his sentimental bias toward Ivy League supremacy and purity stains the pages. He subtitles his volume “Playing Gentleman’s Football” and titles one chapter “Football the Summa Cum Laude Way.” Even his own evidence indicates that Ivy football was less than gentlemanly, often being brutal as well as unethical. McCallum admits that since the 1950s football players are still being recruited and are admitted into Ivy institutions because of athletic ability. (p. 25) Yet, he says that athletic recruiting continues to be curtailed. (p. 192) He does not prove either contradictory statement, nor does he prove that football players at Ivy institutions are either excellent as students or are summa cum laude graduates. His statement that “after all, Ivy League football was played by students” (p. 230) infers that other institutions played football with non-students. His unsubstantiated, holier-than-thou statements only diminish the volume’s credibility. It is not likely that a graduate of any Ivy institution would be willing to trudge through lengthy quotes and trite sayings which abound in McCallum’s work. In short, *Ivy League Football* may please some

avid football fans of Ivy League schools, but it does little to approach what many believe to be Ivy League academic excellence.

The volume on *Big Ten Football* relies on extensive quotes from such coaches as Amos Alonzo Stagg, Bob Zupkee, and Ray Eliot. If these reminiscences were history, McCallum would have something of which the muse Clio could be proud. Unfortunately for the reader, McCallum has not written history, rather there are long passages of ex-players and past coaches strung together rather loosely with past game results in a turgid narrative. One of McCallum's heroes was neither a Big Ten coach or player—Knut Rockne. It is ironic that Rockne receives more space than any conference coach including the immortal Stagg. To the volume's credit, the 80 pages of records make it worthwhile to have in one's possession.

College Basketball, U.S.A. may be the least objectionable of the three volumes, McCallum has an obvious love of basketball and its winners. About three-quarters of the book deals with the NCAA tournaments since 1939. This book, as with the other two, has excessively long quotes. Lengthy two-page quotes from such luminaries as Bill Russell or Al McGuire do not substitute for thinking on the part of the historian. McCallum comes closest to writing good history in his chapter on the 1951 basketball cheating scandal. It is unfortunate that he did not do the same in describing the influences of rule changes, the changing styles of play, and the entrance of blacks on the game of basketball. Through his year-by-year chronicle of NCAA winners, McCallum appears to be confused in his biases whether "Big Time" college basketball, which he glorifies, should be continued or deemphasized so that universities can concentrate on intellectual tasks. At one point he criticizes a player for taking artistic courses in painting and music (p. 92) while praising another for emphasizing art and music in his curriculum. (p. 196) This is symbolic of a greater confusion over what history is or how it should be written.

The three McCallum volumes add little new information about either football or basketball in American colleges. The history of Ivy League football will not likely stand as an historical or scholarly document. With the other two volumes where comparisons can be made, one might do better by reading Kenneth L. 'Tug' Wilson and Jerry Brondfield's *The Big Ten* (1967) and Neil D. Isaacs' *All the Moves: A History of College Basketball* (1975).

Penn State University

Ronald A. Smith