

theme; see, for example, Gary Smith's essay "Gotta Catch'em All" in the September 18, 2000 *Sports Illustrated*, which gives an extensive overview of Graham Trout and his colleagues at Australia's Sports Drug Testing lab.

These are, however, minor criticisms. Murray Phillips has written a fascinating history of Australian sports coaching. I very much hope that Phillips, buoyed up by the success of this volume, will think it worthwhile to develop a subsequent volume which expands and develops the themes so expertly explored by him in this pioneering study.

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SPERBER, MURRAY. *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate Education*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000. Pp. xvii + 322. Notes, index. \$26.00 cb.

Murray Sperber is once again back upon his familiar soapbox preaching against the evils of major college athletics. To those who have read his jeremiadic *College Sports, Inc.* (1990) and *Onward...to Victory* (1998), as well as his comparatively laudatory study of Notre Dame football (*Shake Down the Thunder*, 1993), his latest book will ring familiar. In his most recent outburst, however, Sperber presents a new and complex, if somewhat convoluted, hypothesis that deserves serious examination. Using the example of Julius Caesar, who drew the attention of Romans away from the corruption and decay in their society by providing "bread and circus," Sperber contends that administrators at universities have callously diverted substantial chunks of academic budgets away from undergraduate academic programs in order to bolster the pursuit of national sport rankings and championships. In return for this heinous scam, they have bought off would-be student protesters by providing big-time college sport as a diversion, complete with the cultural ambience of the all-night kegger and the pregame tailgate party.

Sperber is hardly a stranger to the ongoing debate about the proper role of athletics on a college campus. In the autumn of 2000 he received national attention when he took an unpaid leave of absence from Indiana University, where he is a professor of English and American Studies, because of the death threats he received in the wake of the firing of basketball coach Bob Knight. He had been an outspoken critic of what he considered to be Knight's autocratic and demeaning coaching methods. Those familiar with Sperber's work will not be surprised to learn that he has been a leader in the recent establishment of the "Drake Group"—formally the National Alliance for College Athletic Reform—which has as its goal the fundamental restructuring of intercollegiate athletics.

There are plenty of villains in Murray Sperber's world. For example, there are inept and timorous campus presidents who either do not understand the nature of intercollegiate athletics and/or who are afraid of running afoul of influential boosters, trustees, alumni, legislators, athletic directors, and coaches. There are also the great majority of faculty, who not only are indifferent to the role of athletics on their campus but are committed to seeking national rankings of another type with the wholehearted support of

deans and presidents. In the academic world “national recognition” of universities comes from the prestige generated by faculties that publish large stacks of books and articles, command high consulting fees, obtain large research grants, and restrict much of their teaching to graduate students. “Every minute I spend in an undergraduate classroom,” a University of Michigan scientist is quoted as saying, “is costing me money and prestige” (84).

The losers in this environment are undergraduate students who themselves have acceded to an unwritten “nonaggression pact” with their professors. In return for tolerating the boredom of uninspired lecture classes held in massive auditoriums and the instruction offered by inexperienced graduate students, they have been appeased by a lowering of academic standards and course requirements that has resulted in egregious grade inflation. Undergraduates are happy that they don’t have to work very hard for their degrees, and faculty are delighted to be freed up from the time-consuming task of teaching undergraduates so they can pursue their research and other professional activities. In return for the acquiescence of undergraduates in this conspiracy of complacency, administrators have tacitly approved a campus culture that provides undergraduates with the exciting spectacle of major college athletics that is presented within a social atmosphere awash in alcohol.

Sperber describes a pathetic, if not pathological, campus culture that includes the complicity of major beer companies and television sports networks, whose programming and advertising has helped make the consumption of vast amounts of alcohol an integral part of attending a college athletic event. He quotes from a popular guide to college life that describes a football weekend at Louisiana State University: “Nearly every [student] organization on campus hosts parties throughout the year.... For football weekends all of the campus streets are closed to accommodate the massive number of people tailgating, drinking, and partying.” Sperber decries the anti-intellectual atmosphere that pervades beer drenched fraternity houses and raucous dormitories where students devote more time watching mindless television programs and playing video games than studying.

Central to Sperber’s thesis is his contention that athletic programs are out of control financially. Even the most successful big-time programs, he points out, routinely lose money each year. Thus the crucial assumption upon which he bases his book is that when administrators cover those deficits from other sources they invariably divert money away from programs that could improve undergraduate education.

Presiding over this scandal that has diminished the quality of undergraduate education at big-time athletic institutions is Sperber’s perennial whipping boy, the NCAA, that monolithic organization that wields the power of life and death over member institutions. As Sperber has made clear in earlier writings, the NCAA has always been controlled by powerful athletic directors and coaches who have manipulated it as a means of protecting their own special interests. Sperber is clearly on target when he writes, “The irony of the entire organization [the NCAA] is that its proclaimed intention is to regulate and reform college athletics, when in reality it is the cause of the corruption” (32).

As Sperber described in extensive detail in *Onward to Victory*, the NCAA’s well-oiled publicity machine has long perpetuated a set of absurd myths upon which the college sports enterprise has grown big and fat. He returns to the attack in *Beer and Circus*. Essentially, the NCAA has made a mockery of its professed dedication to the “student-athlete.”

The litany of its errors of omission and commission, according to Sperber, is long and depressing: a limp response to abysmal graduate rates of athletes; an irresponsible policy regarding the malaise of illegal gambling; an unwillingness to curb the greed of coaches and athletic directors (e.g., horrifically inflated salaries and lucrative perquisites, shoe contracts, commercial endorsements, summer camps, post-season bonuses, low-interest housing mortgages); inept and uneven enforcement of recruiting transgressions: an unwillingness to control the length of seasons and the hours an athlete is required to work at his/her sport each week; an inability to halt academic fraud by athletes in cahoots with university-hired tutors and advisors; and even its refusal to provide poor athletes with modest stipends while simultaneously prohibiting them from earning money during the academic year. Sitting atop its current \$6 billion basketball television contract, which is only one of many substantial sources of income, while pursuing policies that work to the detriment of individual athletes and the academic integrity of its member institutions, Sperber contends that the NCAA is guilty of “hypocrisy” (28).

Although Sperber is clearly on target, it is unfortunate that his narrative is long on generalization and short on specifics, especially as it relates to his basic argument that college sports has damaged undergraduate education. Although a large number of names of universities are casually mentioned, he presents only anecdotal criteria for defining a “beer and circus” institution, and provides precious little specificity in terms of precisely how the transfer of funds is “crippling” undergraduate programs. The reader anticipates but never receives hard evidence about the practice on specific campuses. Although one gets the impression that his targets are the members of the five or six most prominent Division IA conferences, things get especially muddled when his narrative meanders at times into the so-called “mid-major” conferences. There is no attempt to assess the situation on the campuses of the several hundred other NCAA member institutions that compete below Division IA. Sperber’s narrative begs the question as to whether alcohol is also a serious problem on campuses where athletics are of little or no importance. His implication is that the things that matter for faculty on a “beer and circus” campus are much different elsewhere; but such patently non-major sports institutions that make up the Ivy League are just as driven by research, consulting contracts, graduate teaching and “national prestige” as those in the Southeast or Big Twelve conferences. A desire to escape the tedium of undergraduate survey courses is widespread across American higher education; most high-quality faculty naturally prefer to work primarily with advanced students. At least in the five institutions I’ve been associated with in the past forty years as an administrator and professor, the one consistent refrain that I’ve heard from faculty is on behalf of a reduction in their undergraduate teaching loads so that they can do more research. Do not the faculties of the most prestigious of institutions where athletic programs are decidedly of little importance pursue a program that is heavy in research and graduate education, a commitment that is decidedly encouraged, if not required, by campus administrators? Undergraduates at these institutions, it is safe to say, also consume their share of beer without the presence of a nationally ranked football or basketball team. Thus while I find much to applaud in Sperber’s identification and description of the problems posed by intercollegiate athletics at the Division IA level, I am less than convinced by his “beer and circus” explanation as to the cause.

I thus leave Murray Sperber's latest book with considerable ambivalence. There is no doubt that his indictment of the transgressions of major college sports is right on the mark. But his casual conflation of alcohol, faculty research, grade inflation, large lecture classes, and heavy use of teaching assistants with the malfeasance of athletic programs does not ring true. At best "beer and circus" is an underwhelming argument, at worst a title and concept seriously misleading. The reasons we have a mess on our hands with the enterprise of major college sports go much deeper than pizza and beer. The causes rest far beyond the concern of faculty about their professional growth and development. Perhaps in his next book Professor Sperber will pursue other potential transgressors: the leadership of the sprawling and powerful bureaucracy that the NCAA has become; state legislatures and their education and appropriation committees that are pivotal intersections of public university and community; boards of trustees and booster organizations (which at times think and act virtually as one and the same); the priorities of the athletic department as they intersect with the educational mission of the university; and the enormous commercial stake in big-time college sports of the print media and radio and television networks.

Although his central thesis remains an unproven assumption, this is nonetheless an important book that deserves a wide reading audience. Hopefully Professor Sperber will not abandon his crusade on behalf of athletic and academic reform.

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SWADDLING, JUDITH. *The Ancient Olympic Games* (2d ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. Pp. 112. Illustrated. Further reading, index. \$16.95 pb.

The second edition of this readable volume still lacks a preface to explain that it was written by Swaddling, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, as a handbook for the British public to accompany a 1980 exhibition on the Ancient Olympics at the British Museum. Instead, a supportive letter from Buckingham Palace from Princess Anne is offered as a foreword, although a curious one in a work now copublished in Texas. The book has been expanded from 80 to 112 pages, and while the majority of the original text is retained, there are minor revisions, changes in paragraphing, and short additions—especially modern comparisons and sometimes mildly condescending comments about ancient Greek athletes' performances—at many places in the original sections. Chapters on the site (25 pages) and the events (34 pages) still comprise over half the text; other chapters range from 3 to 9 pages. The main expansions include: 5 pages on medical and dietary issues, 6 on the modern revival of the Olympics, 5 on politics and scandals, a new Index (3 pages) and Illustration Credits, and new illustrations.

Like the original, this edition has nine chapters, but with some shifting and additions. The first two chapters, "The Olympic Games: Where and Why?" and "The Site", are retained. The original chapters 3, "The Games...and 5, "Rules" (largely about females and the Heraia), are combined and awkwardly retitled as "Records and Regulations" (meaning