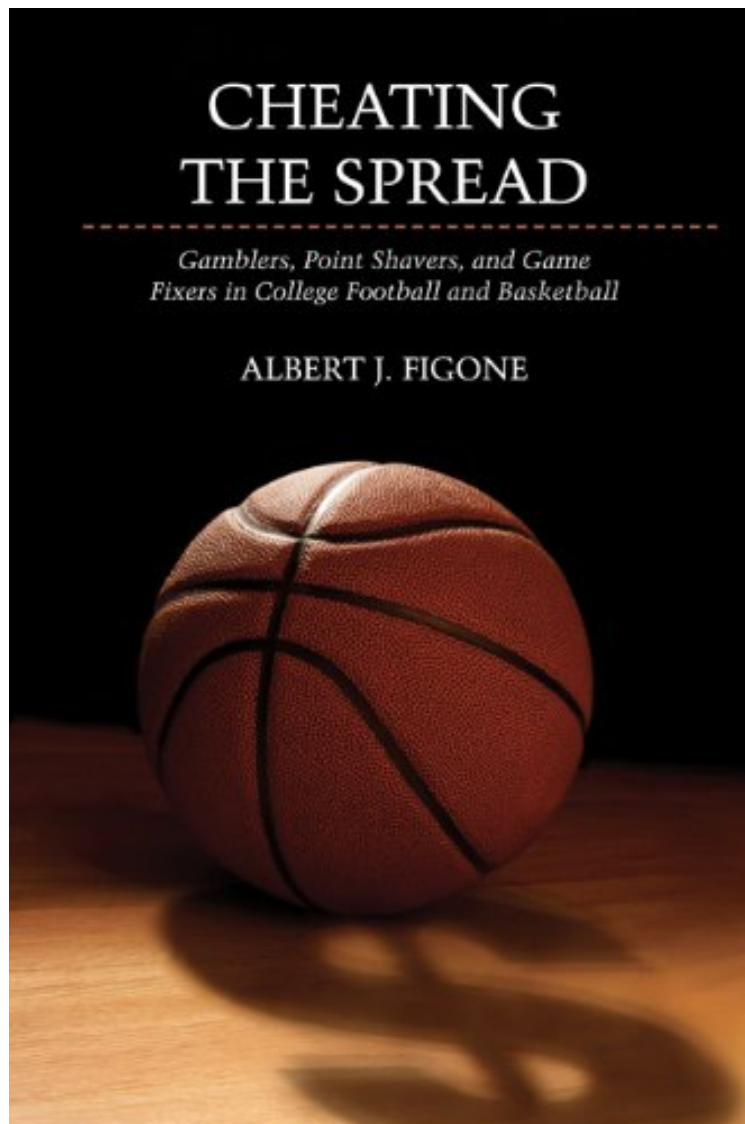


[Ebook pdf] Cheating the Spread: Gamblers, Point Shavers, and Game Fixers in College Football and Basketball (Sport and Society)

Cheating the Spread: Gamblers, Point Shavers, and Game Fixers in College Football and Basketball (Sport and Society)

Albert J. Figone

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Albert J. Figone : Cheating the Spread: Gamblers, Point Shavers, and Game Fixers in College Football and Basketball (Sport and Society) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cheating the Spread: Gamblers, Point Shavers, and Game Fixers in College Football and Basketball (Sport and Society):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent stories and research, weak analysisBy Aaron C.

BrownThis book is an interesting account of the major betting scandals in college basketball (with a few football ones thrown in) from the 1930s to 2010. It's heavy on facts, with long lists of names and games revealed in court cases, legislative hearings and published insider accounts. It's weaker on personalities and explanations. One problem is the book treats gambling as the main problem (the author asserts that student gambling is a bigger problem than drug and alcohol abuse) and constantly refers to some pure athletic ideal. In fact all professional sports were organized by gamblers for the purposes of betting, and the same goes for the big-time off-campus college sporting events that began in the 1920s. The first neolithic footrace probably involved some kind of betting, it's just part of competition. But there's a huge difference between a runner betting her spear against another's leather pouch that she can run faster, and the organized commercial cash gambling by non-participants that is discussed in the book. It's not the gambling, it's the commercialism which extends far beyond gambling, and the associated corruption. When a popular activity is outlawed, corruption inevitably follows. A related problem is the author understates the scale of gambling. It has always been a huge business. It was the largest contributor to the development of telegraph and later telephone services. The author refers to police "looking the other way," but in 1951 the Kefauver Committee determined that criminal bribes paid to police in the US were greater than total police official salaries, meaning that it was more accurate to say that gambling and prostitution were funding policing than that the police were seriously interested in stopping vice. No one has attempted to measure police bribes since. And, of course, it's not just police. Universities, politicians, sportswriters and many others benefit from a system funded mainly by gambling, while pretending that gambling and corruption are rare. The author calls it ironic that gamblers are the front line in rooting out fixes, but this is not surprising. Fans want to see their teams win, they care little if the win results from a bad call, injury to opposing player or rule violation. Less partisan fans just want an entertaining game. The organizers want ticket and media revenue. The only people who care whether or not the game is played fairly are people who have bet on it. And unlike everyone else, gamblers care as much about late season games between bad teams as championship matchups. For these reasons the book is weak on understanding cheating from the perspective of cheaters or the gambling industry. It makes up for this however by clear treatment from the perspective of athletes. The book doesn't delve into why there is fixing and other corruption in big-money college athletics, or who benefits, but it does an excellent job of describing the effect on individuals caught up in scandals.

Delving into the history of gambling and corruption in intercollegiate sports, *Cheating the Spread* recounts all of the major gambling scandals in college football and basketball. Digging through court records, newspapers, government documents, and university archives and conducting private interviews, Albert J. Figone finds that game rigging has been pervasive and nationwide throughout most of the sports' history. The insidious practice has spread to implicate not only bookies and unscrupulous gamblers but also college administrators, athletic organizers, coaches, fellow students, and the athletes themselves.

From BooklistCollege sports and point-shaving have a long history. No surprise, given that college athletes are often cash-strapped kids on scholarship from poor backgrounds. In the current environment, they exist in a hypocritical environment in which it may seem that everyone around them, from coaches to administrators, is getting rich off their athletic abilities. Figone, a former head coach in college and high school, has written a carefully researched and annotated history of game fixing in college basketball and football. Basketball, of course, has been the favorite of fixers through the years, likely because there are fewer variables (players) competing and a couple of key basketball players can have a very effective yet subtle influence on a game. Gambling and fixing games became a real issue after WWII and was centered on the East Coast. But it quickly spread. Figone presents the various scandals in great detail yet generally avoids moral condemnation. He's written a history, not a sermon. A compelling, informative look into the dark side of collegiate athletics. --Wes Lukowsky "*Cheating the Spread* is an important study that usefully synthesizes existing literature on college sports gambling and the major scandals and provides a wealth of new information gleaned from heretofore untapped sources. The exhaustive research in *Cheating the Spread* has a comprehensive sweep that is stunning."