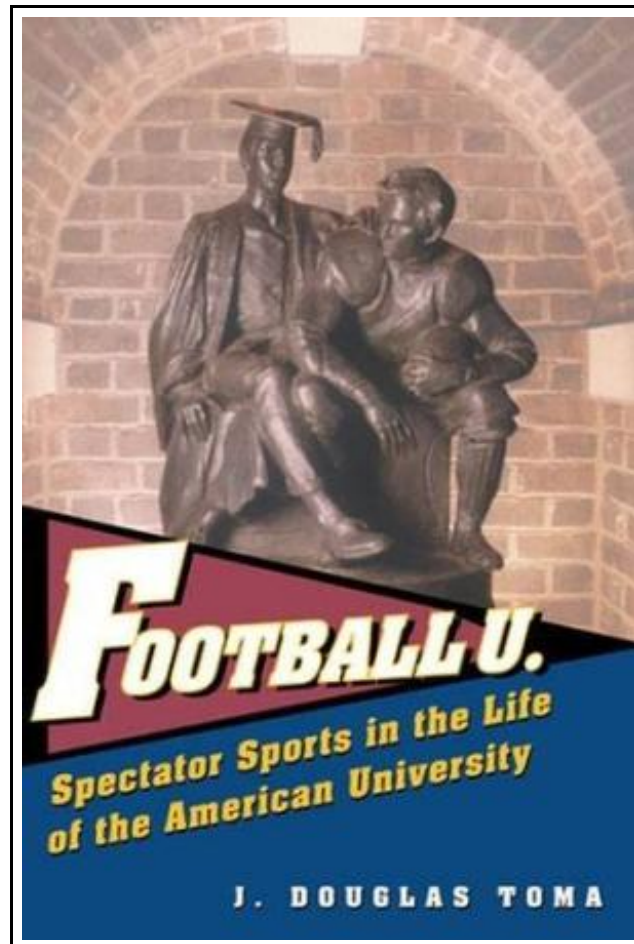


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The University of Michigan Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Football U: Spectator Sports in the Life of the American University, J. Douglas Toma, The Big Ten . . . the SEC . . . the Final Four . . . sometimes it seems that American higher education is more about sports than studies. Not so, says this well-researched, evenhanded study of athletics in university life. Sports--particularly football--play a key role in defining institutions that might otherwise be indistinguishable and are an indispensable tool in building a sense of community on campus, as well as an important factor in mustering alumni and political support. While abuses exist, the "football school" is not only a legitimate member of the academic community but an inevitable one as well--and football provides much-needed identity at every level from the local to the national scale. Pointing out that universities compete as much academically as athletically, J. Douglas Toma argues that fielding a winning sports team is a quick, effective way to win recognition and that doing so pays dividends across the board, by raising public awareness (thereby making a school more attractive to potential students and faculty) and by creating a wider constituency of "fans" whose loyalties pay off in increased contributions and appropriations that support academic programs as well. He notes that universities like Harvard and Yale, now eclipsed on the gridiron, were "football powers" in the era when America's westward expansion spawned new schools unable to challenge older institutions academically but able to win acclaim through sports. This fosters a campus and alumni culture based on "football Saturday"--a bonding experience that helped forge a larger community whose support, both personal and financial, has become integral to the life of the institution. Football U. brings welcome impartiality to a subject all too often riven by...



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