

Reviewed Work: ACC Basketball: The Story of the Rivalries, Traditions, and Scandals of the First Two Decades of the Atlantic Coast Conference

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Throughout the 20th century, multiple sports in the United States began to grow drastically in popularity. Football, baseball, and basketball would begin to take root across America, including expansion into countries across the globe. No other college sport could compete with football's immense influence in U.S. schools. College football was center stage in regard to popularity before the rise of college basketball. J. Samuel Walker's analysis, *ACC Basketball: The Story of the Rivalries, Traditions, and Scandals of the First Two Decades of the Atlantic Coast Conference*, discusses college basketball on the Atlantic coast during the second half of the 20th century. Walker analyzes the origins and subsequent growth of the ACC conference, addressing issues the conference faced as time progressed. Some issues that the conference faced included academic scandals, racial discrimination, fan behavior, and recruiting problems. Despite social and moral changes through the decades of the ACC's growth, Walker

argues that administrators focused on the principle of balanced academic and athletic performance. He states,

Despite the important changes in the competitive fabric and cultural terrain of ACC basketball between 1953 and 1972, one crucial aspect remained a constant. Administrators of conference schools were deeply concerned about maintaining a proper balance between academic principles and athletic achievements.

Walker's investigation is structured in chronological order. Chapters are based on different events or issues that unfolded during the second half of the twentieth century. The first chapter investigates the major issues the NCAA faced concerning college basketball, especially the gambling corruption that infested college sports. Each subsequent chapter analyzes foundational events that would influence the malleable principles that would define the conference. It also evaluates monumental figures like academic administrators, head coaches, and players. Walker argues that Everett Case was "the man who made ACC basketball". He was the head coach of the NC State Wolfpack's men's basketball team and is often considered one of the greatest in his field. His work was monumental in drawing attention to the new conference and North Carolina's college basketball abilities. "From the first championship that Case won at NC State in 1947 until his final conference title in 1959, his success increased fan interest, intensified rivalries, and elevated the caliber of competition in the Southern Conference and then the ACC." An integral chapter that discusses a major issue of the ACC in Walker's book is the seventh. Titled "The Integration of ACC Basketball", this chapter investigates the Atlantic Coast Conference's reaction to changing racial laws in America during the 1960s while discussing the disadvantages that African American athletes faced when attempting to participate in college athletics. Walker analyzes reactions that college institutions had towards events like the Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, especially those in the South. Walker

provides in-depth information about the first African American players in the ACC, such as Billy Jones joining Maryland's men's basketball roster in 1965.

Walker's historiography stays focused on the ACC conference throughout. He engages his topic extensively, exploring multiple forms of sources. Walker uses primary sources like newspaper articles, images, and NCAA investigations. He also uses plenty of secondary sources, providing a myriad of statistics and other information about ACC basketball. Walker notes he got most of his information from university archives from institutions in the ACC, while also studying other scholar's work. These sources of information are reliable and provide accurate facts for Walker's analysis. His work is slow in the first few chapters. The build-up is somewhat of a drag to get through, as much of the information sets the tone for the rest of the historiography. Another issue is that Walker's terminology used throughout is one that only a fan of basketball would understand. It would be difficult for a reader, who is new to college basketball, to fully understand all the information provided by the sources and statistics.

Other than a few small grievances, Walker's work is a thorough and reliable source of information about the Atlantic Coast Conference. Any college basketball fan interested in the start of the ACC would be wise to read this historiography. Walker provides an excellent recollection of the events that led to the beginning and rise of the current powerhouse conference in college basketball.