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Brian M. Ingrassia. *The Rise of Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

Brian Ingrassia's book, *The Rise of Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football*, takes a look at the relationship between intercollegiate football and the academic institutions they are associated with. The author's argument starts with the state of universities following the Civil War, when "students only cared only for mind, not muscles" before "the war intervened and successfully demonstrated the superiority of body over soul, the importance of action over rhetoric" (p. 14). In this book Ingrassia demonstrates the evolution from these thoughts in the 1800s to the events surrounding collegiate football following WWII, and various conflicts between the institutions throughout this time period.

The book engages with the topic in a variety of ways, with the two main threads of logic following the conflicts and the functions of football and academia. The conflicts between the universities and "big-time football" came up early in the book. What had originally been seen as a way for college students to give their minds a break from their usual academic rigor, was soon viewed by many as a violent and dangerous sport. This point made by the author is backed up both by quotes defending the "manly sport" and statistics regarding injuries and deaths sustained by the athletes. Another early conflict used as an example by the author was the differences in the prestige awarded to student athletes and those who were achieving great things academically. One professor in particular, Simeon Baldwin, stated that football "tended to lower the grade of scholarship and literary achievements by distracting students and elevating athletes to a level of

prestige formerly held only by scholarly young men” (p. 46). One last way that Ingrassia demonstrated conflict was through the issue of consumerism. Many academic leaders felt like college football should not have the goal of supplying entertainment to the masses, but rather be used as a way for students to get exercise. With the rise of large stadiums and football becoming a widespread spectacle, schools could no longer fight this fight and had to accept that football was a great source of revenue for the university.

The functions of football (as argued by the author) included demonstrating and practicing masculinity, preserving a racial hierarchy, and creating a bridge between academia and the public. As far as demonstrating masculinity, collegiate athletics have always had this ulterior motive blended in with the health benefits of exercise. Ingrassia provides evidence time and time again of football functioning as a way for student athletes to promote their own masculinity. There is no better example than the one the author gave in chapter two, when a mother petitioned on the side of football even after her son had been killed in a game. In this case she wanted to save the “manly sport” her son loved (p. 50). Football was also used as a way to preserve the racial hierarchy, and this idea is presented in two specific places by the author. First, in chapter two Ingrassia describes a game that was played by two black teams in front of an interracial crowd. The white spectators who were reported to have expected to see “a game where there was an exhibition of brute strength” were surprised to see a game comparable to the highest level of white football (p. 42). The second example given by the author appeared in chapter 5. A Boston attorney stated, to Harvard’s president, that everyone admired “the man who plays the game white” (p. 123). The author makes it abundantly clear that even though black players were performing up to the standard of white players, they were still not seen as serious competitors. In

addition to this, the ideas of fair and honest play were associated with good Anglo-Saxon behavior that was admired at the time.

Overall, this book is an enjoyable and informative read. Ingrassia does a great job of examining the history of the controversy surrounding the relationship of higher education and football. One thing the author could have done to give his points more depth would have been to have more information on how the players and students felt about the issues addressed in this book. This book is a necessity for anyone wanting to research the history of higher education and collegiate sports. With the multitudes of information provided by the author, other areas of research are readily addressed, such as: 19th and 20th century sports, sports and race in America, financial aspects of sport, medicine and psychology in sports, and early ideas surrounding coaching.