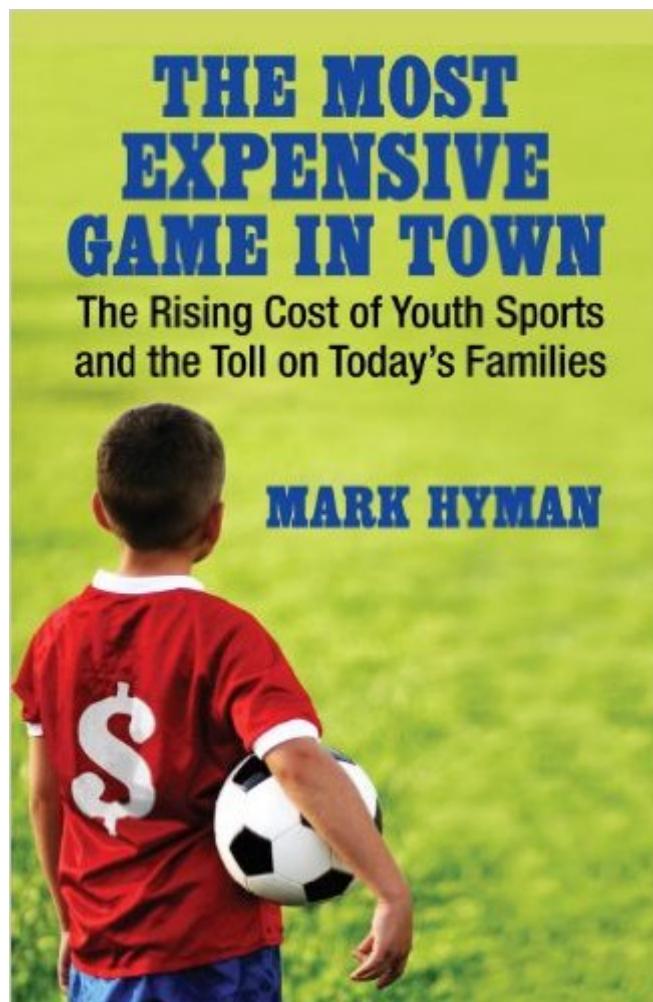


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The Most Expensive Game In Town: The Rising Cost Of Youth Sports And The Toll On Today's Families



Synopsis

A look at how commercialization has transformed youth sports from fun into a heavily commercialized and profitable venture. Examining the youth sports economy from many sides—the major corporations, the small entrepreneurs, the coaches, the parents, and, of course, the kids—Hyman probes the reasons for rapid changes in what gets bought and sold in this lucrative marketplace. He reveals the effects on kids and profiles the individuals and communities bucking this destructive trend of commercialization. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I really wanted to like this book and had great expectations for it after listening to an interview with the author. Furthermore, I agree with the author that the cost of youth sports - just to participate - is out of hand. The book, however, didn't really tell me anything that I didn't already know. If you have a child that participates in youth sports, nothing in this book will surprise you. Sure I learned about some new websites and services that prey on parents in the elusive quest for the college scholarship and there are plenty of stories about the extent that youth teams travel, but similar stories could have been accumulated at any youth soccer, hockey or basketball game. The extent that ESPN now covers high school sports will come as a shock only to those readers that don't generally watch sports on TV. I guess that the audience for the book though - people out of touch with the reality of youth sports. If you're in it - even a little bit - you know exactly what he's talking about. There's nothing new here. And no solutions about how to put the genie back in the bottle.

I just finished Mark Hyman's *The Most Expensive Game in Town* and recommend it to parents, educators and anyone who's thinking about sponsoring a little league team in their town. While it's become very chic to poo-poo the notion of "keeping up with the Joneses," when it comes to our kids, we're failing miserably. We're so busy buying whatever we're told we must have, must do, must provide for our kids that we're ruining some of the great things about being a kid. This is not a book about the everyone-gets-a-trophy school of kid sports, but rather the beginning of an accounting of the many, many companies and so-called professionals that have their hands in our kids' lives and our collective pockets. Deep down, we know that most of our kids are not the next Ken Griffey Jr. but there's always that little gleam of hope that if they just had the right equipment, the right coach, the right experiences... they might exceed our expectations. They won't. But there are plenty of snake-oil salesmen who will take plenty of your money to encourage you to hold on to that hope and spend, spend, spend. While this book doesn't have a lot of answers, it does make you think about the questions: how did we let this happen? Why do we keep doing it? How are we reshaping our kids' worlds and expectations? For all those questions, and more, this book is a worthwhile read.

There's nothing wrong with this book, but there's nothing especially excellent about it, either. As another reviewer or two have noted, the main points in this book have been covered extensively by many other media outlets for many years. I'm not sure why a publisher would want to pay Mark Hyman to duplicate excellent magazine and newspaper work by him and many others, except that it's a hot topic. Hyman visits interesting places and does some first-hand reporting on some of the egregious businesses that have arisen in the sports-industrial complex, such as the communities that host youth sports tournaments or the hucksters who claim that their videos will get kids college athletic scholarships. Reading about that stuff just makes me glad that my teenage son is content to play community-level sports once a week, and that I can be an occasional substitute coach. The book suffers from a few things that probably reflect a rush job. First, the preface states (I'm paraphrasing) that the book will follow the travails of three disparate families who have kids in competitive sports. But the author references them only in one chapter, and the three families are hardly representative of anything, given that almost all of the parents are journalists and artists. Second, there's a chapter about corruption in urban sports leagues that are trying to groom the next NBA star, but I'm not sure what that has to do with sports in upper-middle-class suburbia, which is the focus of the rest of the book. And third, a few folks in the book are criticized for their actions in

2009-2010, and the author makes a point of saying they haven't cleaned up their act. But he wrote the book in 2011, so it's not like they had a lot of time to adjust. In short, if you're new to the topic, this book is a good introduction. If you're already entangled in youth sports, this book is a reminder to keep your perspective and to watch your wallet.

I wish it had kept its focus more on youth sports rather than going into the endorsement and advertisement. Beyond this, it extended into scouts at the college level. Having said this, I am a parent who has fallen into the trap the author so clearly defines! This book was a gift from my dad. Though he did not read it, he thought it would be important for me to read. Daughter of the purchaserCEJ

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