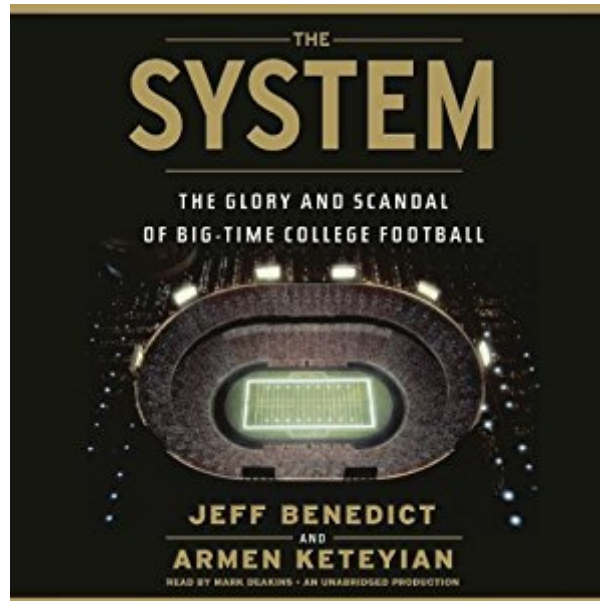




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# The System: The Glory And Scandal Of Big-Time College Football



## Synopsis

AN EXPLOSIVE AND REVELATORY PORTRAIT REPORTED FROM DEEP BEHIND THE SCENES OF BIG-TIME NCAA COLLEGE FOOTBALL: THE PASSION, THE THRILLING ACTION-AND THE SHOCKING REALITIES THAT LIE BENEATH THIS COLOSSAL, MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESSCollege football has never been more popular - or more chaotic. Millions fill 100,000-seat stadiums every Saturday; tens of millions more watch on television every weekend. The 2013 Discover BCS National Championship game between Notre Dame and Alabama had a viewership of 26.4 million people, second only to the Super Bowl. Billions of dollars from television deals now flow into the game; the average budget for a top-ten team is \$80 million; top coaches make more than \$3 million a year; the highest paid, more than \$5 million. But behind this glittering success are darker truths: "athlete-students" working essentially full-time jobs with no share in the oceans of money; players who often don't graduate and end their careers with broken bodies; "janitors" who clean up player misconduct; football "hostesses" willing to do whatever it takes to land a top recruit; seven-figure black box recruiting slush funds. And this: Despite the millions of dollars pouring into the game, 90 percent of major athletic departments still lose money. Yet schools remain caught up in an ever-escalating "arms race" - at the expense of academic scholarships, facilities and faculty. Celebrated investigative journalists Jeff Benedict and Armen Keteyian were granted unprecedented access during the 2012 season to programs at the highest levels across the country at a time of convulsive change in college football. Through dogged reporting, they explored every nook and cranny of this high-powered machine, and reveal how it operates from the inside out. The result: the system through the eyes of athletic directors and coaches, high-flying boosters and high-profile TV stars, five-star recruits and tireless NCAA investigators and the kids on whom the whole vast enterprise depends. Both a celebration of the power and pageantry of NCAA football and a groundbreaking, thought-provoking critique of its excesses, *The System* is the definitive book on the college game.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Any college football fan will enjoy this book. It is an easy read and interesting enough to keep a reader turning pages. The real shocker for me was the unexpected appearance of an old, high school classmate of mine and his mentions and appearances throughout the book. I was lucky enough to attend high school with (the late) Elson Floyd. At the time of this book, he was the president of Washington State University, member of the Pac 12. He was an all-around great guy in school and as an adult, too, according to this book. It was terrific fun to read the personal, behind-the-scenes information about Elson, not just his academic and professional credentials. Once again, sincere condolences to his family. There are no real revelations in this book. If you are a college football fan, you either already know or surmised it all. However, it's an interesting and enjoyable read.

I heard about this on the Paul Finebaum Show. I am a fledgling of college football. My oldest son used to sit and watch college football with his dad. After he left, I tried to watch the game with intent, so when my husband (who is very knowledgeable about the sport) would want to talk about plays, coaches, programs, etc, I would be contributing more than just, "Yes, honey. Oh, that is very interesting." So, more than learn the different conferences and teams comprising the conferences, coaches, etc, I have begun reading books about the sport. I really do recommend this book. It is well written. There are aspects of the book that are difficult to read, yet they are part of the institution that is college football.

The book is well-researched and well-written, it is very easy to read and follow. I learned a lot of things about the college football business that I did not know. And yet, I was disappointed. After all the research turned up several serious problems that are fully documented in the book, the authors did NOT offer any solutions. It is very clear to me, as a long-time fan of college football, that this system has gotten way out of control. College football is the tail wagging the university "dog". The

old "bowl system" did not work, so we went to the BCS. That system did not work, so we morphed into the Football Championship Series with a 4-team playoff. Along the way, ESPN and other networks or media companies pour billions into the "system". Coaches, bowl committees, university presidents all seemingly "make money" from this enterprise, but the truth is that only a handful of top universities make a profit from college football. There is a huge churn of revenue but also a huge and equal churn of expenses, in most cases. My alma mater, for example, LOST \$1.7 M in 2014. All of that had to come out of the university's general fund (ie., the pockets of students and their families via student fees). Meanwhile, the NFL makes "out" because colleges are de facto minor league football teams. The NCAA is at a loss how to police this situation, cheating is rampant. I would have hoped that a thoughtful book like this would have proposed SOME kind of change to evolve the system once more and rectify the obvious deficiencies that the book documented.

As a huge fan of big-time college football, *The System* gave me an inside look into the billion dollar enterprise that I tune in to support every Saturday from the pregame show, *GameDay* to the mid night Pac-12 games on the west coast. And after reading the details of *The System*, I have to admit that I feel a bit dirty supporting this billion dollar enterprise known as Big-Time college football. From the NCAA's bogus claims that these athletes are "Student's First," to the blatant cover ups of sexual assaults by college football athletes, the *System* goes into detail of a lot of things that I have always known to be true but have "turned a blind eye to." When you stop and think about it, the *System* describes a billion dollar enterprise that will stop at absolutely nothing to ensure the sustainability of the money making engine that is college football. For any major college football fan out there, the *System* is well worth the read. It will take you on a ride deep into the inter-workings of the billion dollar enterprise that is college football, and when you finish, I believe that this book might cause you to look at your favorite program in a slightly different light. In closing ... "For one night, everything glorious about college football was on display. The vivid pageantry, collective excellence, communal celebration and fierce competition provided the grand spectacle only NCAA football played at its highest level can deliver. One could almost forget the unremitting pressure, the scandals haunting the sport - the bidding wars for top recruits; the booster payoffs; the horrific injuries; the academic cheating; the rising tide of criminal acts; the brute fact that the young men who sacrificed on the field were interchangeable pieces who received exactly none of the billions of dollars of revenue the game generated.... ALMOST."

*The System* is extraordinarily well written with the authors passion on the subject coming through in

each chapter. Written more in the style of a novel than a traditional documentation, each chapter is a standalone part, with coaches, players, and schools interweaving throughout the book. The title "Glory and Scandal" fits the book well, as it focuses exclusively on neither, rather taking the reader on an emotional rollercoaster through the highs and lows of the lives associated with college football. Points are balanced, well researched, and consistent with other sources. For the diehard college fan, or the casual observer interesting in learning more on how college football works, this book is one of the few must reads.

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