



The Most Expensive Game in Town: The Rising Cost of Youth Sports and the Toll on Today's Families

Mark Hyman

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Building on the eye-opening investigation into the damaging effects of the ultra-competitive culture of youth sports in his previous book, *Until It Hurts*, Mark Hyman's new book looks at the business of youth sports, how it has changed, and how it is affecting young Americans. Examining the youth sports economy from many sides--the major corporations, small entrepreneurs, coaches, parents, and, of course, kids--Hyman probes the reasons for rapid changes in what gets bought and sold in this lucrative marketplace. Just participating in youth sports can be expensive. Among the costs are league fees, equipment, and perhaps private lessons with a professional coach. With nearly 50 million kids playing organized sports each year, it is easy to see how profitable this market can be. Hyman takes us to tournaments sponsored by Nike, Gatorade, and other big businesses, and he talks to parents who sacrifice their vacations and savings to get their (sometimes reluctant) junior stars to these far-off, expensive venues for a chance to shine. He introduces us to videos purporting to teach six-month-old babies to kick a ball, to professional athletes who will "coach" an eight-year-old for a hefty fee, to a town that has literally staked its future on preteen sports. With its extensive interviews and original reporting, *The Most Expensive Game in Town* explains the causes and effects of the commercialization of youth sports, changes that the author argues are distorting and diminishing family life. He closes with strong examples of individuals and communities bucking this destructive trend.

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