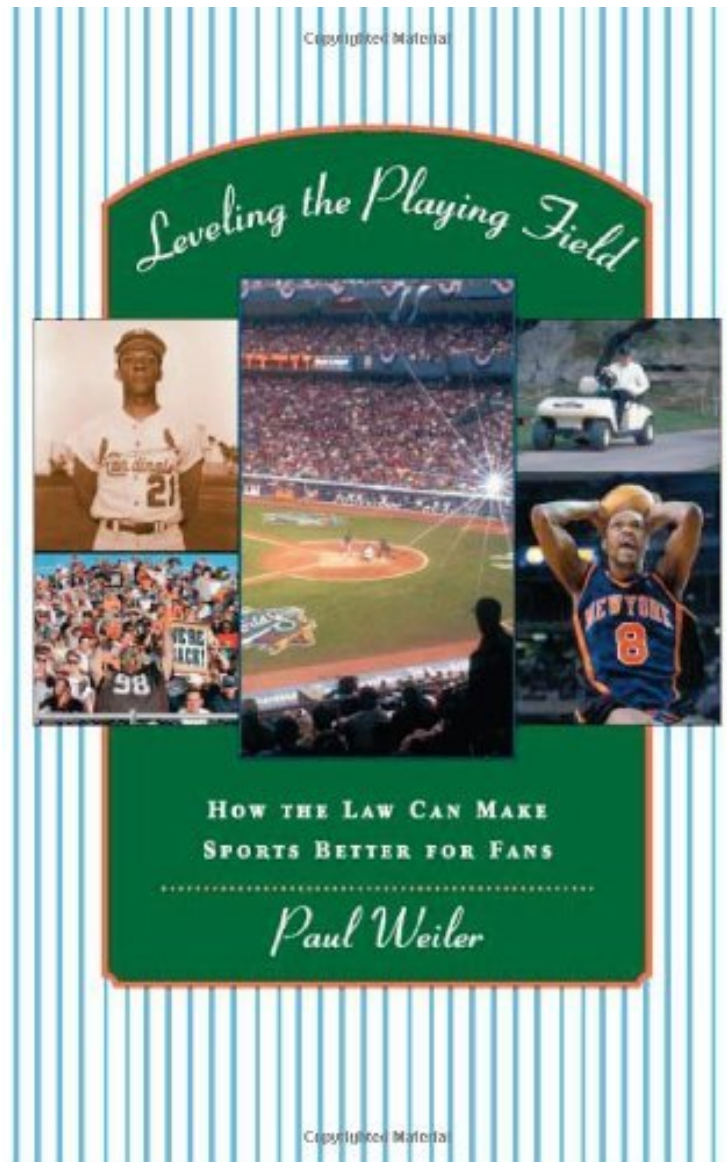


[Free pdf] Leveling the Playing Field

Leveling the Playing Field

Paul C. WEILER

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Paul C. WEILER : Leveling the Playing Field before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Leveling the Playing Field:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One Law Professor's Take on the Problems in Professional Sports By Roger D. Launius Many of the major issues of modern professional sports revolve around issues of the law. Harvard's Henry J. Friendly professor of law Paul C. Weiler believes this firmly and "Leveling the Playing Field" is his attempt to explore this subject. Much of this terrain has been pursued in other works, but Weiler's perspective is interesting.

Weiler takes the reader through the looking glass world of the sports business, exploring the nature of free agency, the various revenue streams of the major sports franchises, the long history of the shakedown for new sports complexes paid for with public money, the problems of steroids and other methods of cheating, and television and other revenues generated through sports activities. It is a familiar story, and Weiler tells it relatively well. His approach is balanced and his tone is evenhanded, even when the subject does not deserve it. His solution to the problems of Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League boil down to one piece of national legislation. "The only way to avoid a regular replay of the experience of the 1990s is to have Congress pass a law that bars redistribution of middle-American taxpayer dollars into the pockets of wealthy Americans like George Steinbrenner." He adds, "I hope my readers now understand that as fans we would be better off if our favorite sports had the combination of a salary tax and a stadium cap" (p. 345). That might help, although I am opposed to any restraint on the ability of players to receive whatever income they are able to negotiate for their services since they are fundamentally the stars of the show, but I only wish it were that simple! I very much question all the problems of the sports business could be cured in this way, and I must add that the devil would be in the details of any such congressional action and its ramifications might be strikingly different from what was intended. Witness the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform Act and how it simply changed the rules of the game; it did not appreciably alter the game itself. Additionally, the ability to pass legislation of this type in early twenty-first century America appears virtually nil. While I found this book quite interesting and worthy of consideration, I was annoyed by the relative lack of academic rigor in the discussion. At no point, for instance, did Weiler offer detailed thoughts on the nature of the legislation that he believes is necessary. Additionally, the book is completely without scholarly apparatus, not even a selected bibliography, and I find this unacceptable in a serious work.

The world of sports seems entwined with lawsuits. This is so, Paul Weiler explains, because of two characteristics intrinsic to all competitive sports. First, sporting contests lose their drama if the competition becomes too lopsided. Second, the winning athletes and teams usually take the "lion's share" of both fan attention and spending. So interest in second-rate teams and in second-rate leagues rapidly wanes, leaving one dominant league with monopoly power. The ideal of evenly balanced sporting contests is continually challenged by economic, social, and technological forces. Consequently, Weiler argues, the law is essential to level the playing field for players, owners, and ultimately fans and taxpayers. For example, he shows why players' use of performance-enhancing drugs, even legal ones, should be treated as a more serious offense than, say, use of cocaine. He also explains why proposals to break up dominant leagues and create new ones will not work, and thus why both union representation of players and legal protection for fans--and taxpayers--are necessary. Using well-known incidents--and supplying little-known facts--Weiler analyzes a wide array of moral and economic issues that arise in all competitive sports. He tells us, for example, how Commissioner Bud Selig should respond to Pete Rose's quest for admission to the Hall of Fame; what kind of settlement will allow baseball players and owners to avoid a replay of their past labor battles; and how our political leaders should address the recent wave of taxpayer-built stadiums.

From Library Journal Weiler (law, Harvard) has produced a book that, while suggesting ways in which the law can work for fans to improve sports, will not be readily appreciated by those who would benefit from his largesse--except perhaps for diehard fans of Pete Rose, whose admittance to the Hall of Fame the author supports vociferously. Instead of batting averages, wins and losses, and amusing anecdotes, what we have here are discussions of salary caps, free agency, players' unions, the relative impact on the game of players' use of recreational vs. performance-enhancing drugs, taxpayer-funded stadiums, and other legal/economic issues. To his credit, Weiler does not stop at cataloging sins--he also offers possible solutions. Still, this is more a legal treatise than a sports book, and it will find its greatest audience in large public libraries and institutions of higher learning.--Jim Burns, Ottumwa P.L., IA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. An insightful and penetrating book about the problems of professional sports leagues in the United States...Although most of *Leveling the Playing Field* deals with economic and legal issues affecting pro sports...most interesting...are Weiler's ideas about how to balance the field, improve equitable treatment of athletes and avoid labor unrest...*Leveling the Playing Field* is a levelheaded, sophisticated and important look into what ails professional sports in the United States and what can be done about it. (Andrew Zimbalist Washington Post)[A] keen-edged dissection of modern professional sports in America. (Mike Leary Baltimore Sun)[*Leveling the Playing Field*] may be the best work in the field...[It] offers an accessible, comprehensive analysis of the nature of the professional sports enterprise, and presents the author's vision for how it should be reordered. To my knowledge, no one has done this before. Rich and provocative...[Weiler's] book is chock-full of inventive, provocative, even audacious, proposals for reforming the four major professional team sports [baseball, basketball, football and hockey]...This is a book that cannot be ignored. *Leveling the Playing Field* likely will become the starting point for any discussion of the state of the North American sports enterprise at the turn of the new century. (Roger I. Abrams Jurist: Books-on-Law) This provocative book combines the broad knowledge of an all-seasons sports fan with the clarity of an anti-trust lawyer. Weiler...approaches major league sports as a special study in cartel theory...[He] writes lucidly and persuasively;

rarely has the surface of professional sports been so revealingly pared away. (Allen D. Boyer New York Times Book)Leave it to a professor from Harvard Law School to untangle the dizzying realities of contemporary sports, then offer valid proposals for dealing with escalating salaries, antisocial off-field player behavior, revenue sharing and stadium quandaries. (USA Today Baseball Weekly 2000-11-01)Making sense of the business of professional sports demands advanced degrees in law and commerce. Who but the experts can fathom the complexities of hard and soft salary caps, Group Two free agencies, revenue-sharing and the intricacies of collective-bargaining agreements? Happily, Paul Weiler has arrived to answer the literate...fan's many questions while providing a road map for players, owners, and governments about how to put professional sports on a better financial footing while retaining fan loyalty...Weiler has delivered a wonderfully balanced, nuanced, and richly detailed look at professional sports. (Jeffrey Simpson Globe and Mail 2000-11-18)Paul Weiler has been at the forefront for a long time as an expert in sports and labor. He has been consulted in many of the cases that helped shape the way sports changed in the 70s and 80s on the way to the collective bargaining agreements that all leagues are now working with. He has a better grasp of this subject than anyone I know. When it comes to sports law, Paul Weiler knows the answer before you ask the question. (Will McDonough Boston Globe)The idea that the American legal system can improve something for the public benefit is indeed novel, and many potential readers may be intrigued by such an unusual, first-time-for-everything prospecthellip;The discussion finally reveals major league sport for what it really is: a vast funneling operation by which public money is transferred into the pockets of a few playing partners. (John Barnes ISUMA) Paul Weiler has always been a name and an opinion you can trust in the sports industry. His advice is sought out by all. He has created a standard that will be hard to duplicate. (Gene Upshaw, Executive Director of the NFL Players Association)