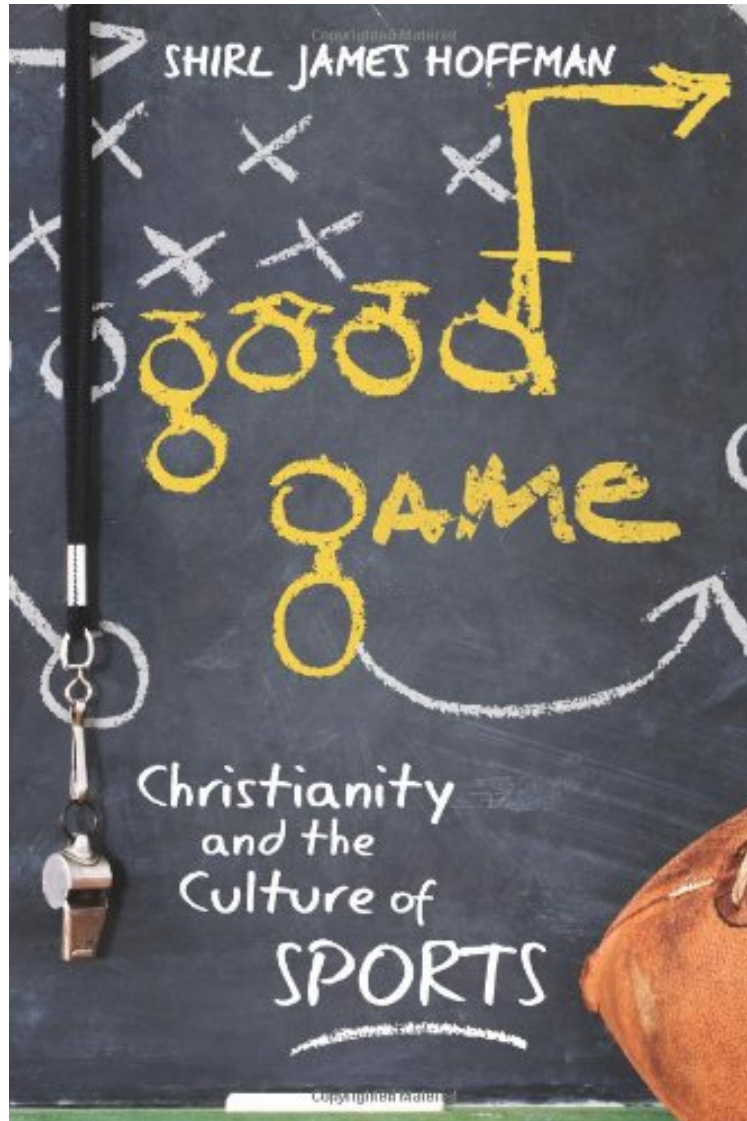


## Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports

*Shirl James Hoffman*

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**Shirl James Hoffman : Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great insight into the world of sportsBy DanielGreat insight into the world of sports, and how the evangelical church not only began to associate with sport, but how and why we have developed such strong bonds with both community and league sports. written well, and in an unbiased manner as Mr. Hoffman grew up in, worked with sports for most of his career5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Dense, thoughtful and neededBy CustomerThis is a very long (300+ pages), dense and thoughtful book. I didn't

always agree with the arguments Hoffman set forth, but he does an excellent job at thinking critically about a topic needs further exploration - namely the intersection between Christian faith and sports. A point that Hoffman often comes back to is that Christians have been influenced by sports more than the other way around. The first half of this book is a history of the church's relationship with sports. This was an important section, though I found it hard to get through at times. It felt more like a book I would read for class rather than for pleasure. The second half of the book was more contemporary and tackled topics such as the killer instinct and prayer on the athletic field. I enjoyed this section much more and would recommend reading it first if you are interested in this treatise, but don't have time to go through the whole thing. Overall, I found this book well-researched (the bibliography is massive) and necessary. Hoffman is an expert on the topic of faith and sports. He uses many stories and anecdotes across generations that I had either never heard or were buried in my mind and does a masterful job weaving it all together. Sports need to be brought into the conversation between Christ and culture. Hopefully, this book will open some much-needed dialogue regarding some insidious aspects of sports and competition. It gets into some solutions at the end, but just being aware and surfacing issues is an important first step. (The book was provided for review by the publisher.) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Gave perspective on a topic that is usually not discussed By Robert Huttmeier Dr. Hoffman's book is an insightful text about the relationship between Christianity and sports. The book is split into two sections. The first half is a history of Christian thought regarding Sports and play. The second part is a reflection on modern sports in light of Christian principles. The author is highly critical of the myths that surround modern day sports. Hoffman's book provides many and diverse examples in his criticisms of the sports industry. My biggest criticism was more of an annoyance than a problem with his material. This was that he tended to make evangelicals seem separate and above all other Christians, even though he recounts plenty of examples of their failure. It is as if Evangelicals should know better than other types of Christians, who are corrupted. However, even with this problem, the book is still brings up many valid points about something that is little talked about.

In recent years the United States has seen an influx of Christian athletes and coaches into big-time sports, as well as a heightened importance placed on sports in church programs and enormous platforms for intercollegiate sports at Christian schools and colleges. However, as Shirl Hoffman critiques, a Christian vision of sport remains merely superficial replete with prayers before free throws and praises after touchdowns but offering little if any alternative vision from the secular sports culture. Far from being the kind of life-affirming, faith-affirming events that they could be, games played in Christian college gymnasiums, for example, too often end up as mockeries of the faith statements given prominence in their mission statements. Here, in this thoughtful, narrative-driven exploration, Hoffman retells numerous fascinating stories from the world of ancient and contemporary sports and draws on the history of the Christian tradition as he seeks to answer the question "What would it mean to think Christianly about sport?"

From Booklist Tom Krattenmakers recent *Onward Christian Athletes* (2009) explored the efforts of the Christian Right to join Evangelical Christianity with professional sports. Here Hoffman takes a slightly different approach to what is essentially the same subject, tackling the relationship between faith and sports from a more ideological perspective. He suggests that while Evangelical Christian groups are forging connections with sports (because sports is a high-profile platform), they really don't understand the nature of sports. He explores the fundamental paradox of joining sports (which encourages and celebrates success) to religion (which consistently stresses the importance of losing). The essential problem, he says, is that, in harnessing itself to sports, the Christian community doesn't really have a clear sense of its goal or a coherent plan to achieve it. As a result, sports are becoming, in many ways, a mockery of Christianity, a superficial set of rites and behaviors with no spiritual or philosophical foundation. Many readers may disagree with the author's thesis, but even they will agree that he supports it abundantly and argues it well. --David Pitt "Wonderful! This is an amazing achievement, blending sociological expertise, theological savvy, and profound spiritual sensitivities." Richard J. Mouw, President and Professor of Christian Philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary "This should be required reading for every thoughtful Christian." Robert K. Johnston, author of *The Christian at Play* "Tom Krattenmaker's recent *Onward Christian Athletes* (2009) explored the efforts of the Christian Right to join evangelical Christianity with professional sports. Here Hoffman takes a slightly different approach to what is essentially the same subject, tackling the relationship between faith and sports from a more ideological perspective. He suggests that while evangelical Christian groups are forging connections with sports (because sports is a high-profile platform), they really don't understand the nature of sports. He explores the fundamental paradox of joining sports (which encourages and celebrates success) to religion (which "consistently stresses the importance of losing"). The essential problem, he says, is that, in harnessing itself to sports, the Christian community doesn't really have a clear sense of its goal or a coherent plan to achieve it. As a result, sport is becoming, in many ways, a mockery of Christianity, a superficial set of rites and behaviors with no spiritual or philosophical foundation. Many readers may disagree with the author's thesis, but even they will agree that he supports it abundantly and argues it well." Booklist Magazine "The breadth of [Hoffman's] knowledge of the history of sport, especially in its relationship to religion, and his keen insights into what it might mean to think Christianly about sports contribute to a readable and impassioned

plea for more careful and more spiritual reflection about what sports have come to mean for us and our world."Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society"[Good Game] will open your eyes to ideas and knowledge that may have never crossed your mind."Hard Music Magazine"Remarkable in its scope, ranging from early Roman Imperial games to contemporary athletic contests of every kind, this volume provides a powerful examination of the relationship between sport and Christianity."Bryan Stone, E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelicalism, Boston University School of TheologyAbout the AuthorShirl James Hoffman is Professor Emeritus of Exercise and Sport Science at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The Executive Director of the American Kinesiology Association, he is the author of Sport and Religion and the editor of Introduction to Kinesiology: Studying Physical Activity, now in its third edition.