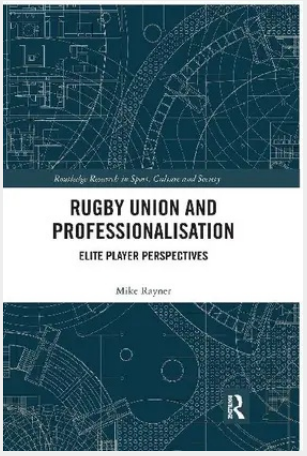
Rayner

Rugby Union and Professionalisation

Elite Player Perspectives



The game of rugby has changed significantly in the course of its history. In the early part of the 19th century it evolved from a folk game played by the working class to a recreational activity for public schoolboys. From the 1820s rugby represented an opportunity for gentlemen to demonstrate physical prowess and masculinity and in more recent times it has developed into an activity that reflects the changing attitudes towards professional sport. For the most part of the last one hundred years, rugby union became an important international sport that represented the nationalistic ideals of a number of countries. However, a number of developments, including the increasing influence of a business ethos within sport during the latter decades of the twentieth century, exposed rugby union to the realities of commercialism and all the factors associated with it, especially the demands of a more diverse spectating public. Drawing on interview material with forty-eight elite level rugby union players from England, Wales, Scotland, France, Ireland, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia who participated in elite level rugby union either before, in the overlapping period or after the declaration of professionalism, this book traces the evolution of attitudes towards professionalism from a players' perspective and develops a critical review of the impact that professionalism has had upon the sport of rugby union. Rugby Union and Professionalisation: Elite Player Perspectives is fascinating reading for all students and scholars with an interest in rugby union, sport history, sport policy, sport management and the sociology of sport.

This is the first book to focus on rugby union's transition from an amateur to a professional sport and how it has dealt with the realities of commercialism and a more diverse spectating public. Based on interviews with players from eight leading rugby nations, it offers a perspective on how rugby has evolved into a global product.

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