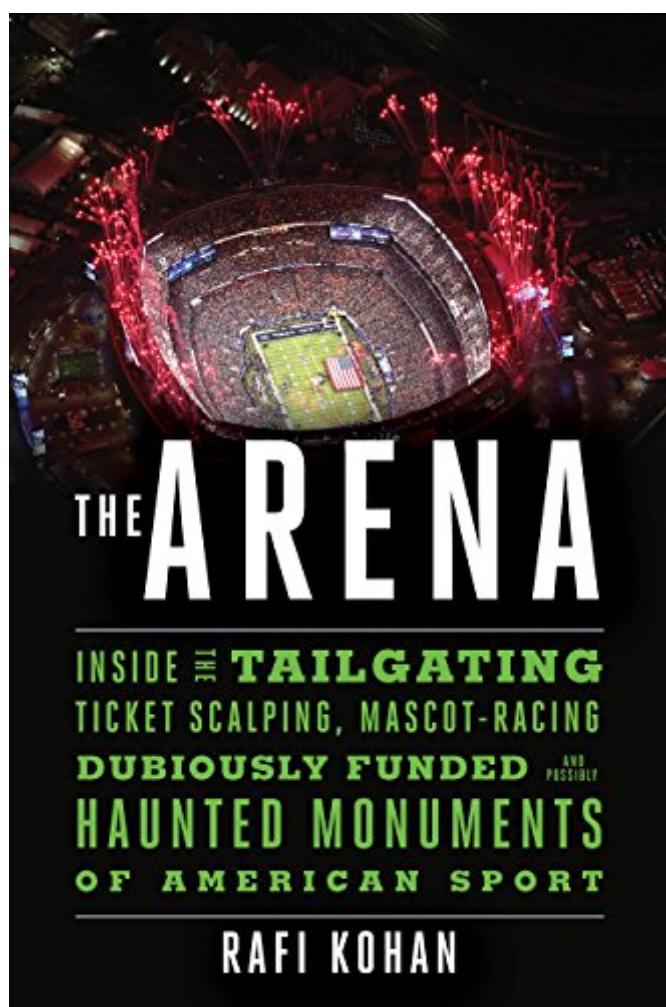


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# The Arena: Inside The Tailgating, Ticket-Scalping, Mascot-Racing, Dubiously Funded, And Possibly Haunted Monuments Of American Sport





## Synopsis

Riotous fan behavior, behind-the-scenes machinations, and madcap histories dominate in this unrivaled exploration of the modern American sports stadium. The American sports stadium, for all its raucous glory, is an overlooked centerpiece—“a veritable temple” of our national culture. A hallowed ground for communal worship, this is where history is made on grass, artificial turf, hardwood, and even ice; where nostalgia flows as freely as ten-dollar beers; where everything thrills, from exploding fireworks to grinning cheerleaders. In *The Arena*, “an altogether new and riveting sports classic” (Josh Wilker), intrepid sportswriter Rafi Kohan crisscrosses the country, journeying from one beloved monument to the next. As he finagles access to the unexpected corners and hidden corridors of our most frequented fields, he discovers just what makes them tick—and what keeps us coming back time and time again. Beginning with the “old-timers,” Kohan pays his respects to Chicago’s ivy-laced Wrigley and Green Bay’s lovable Lambeau, which have creakily adjusted to the twenty-first century while maintaining those age-old quirks fans have prized for generations. Juxtaposing these cherished time capsules with mighty new mammoths like Dallas’s shiny AT&T Stadium, Kohan examines the often-punishing realities of how they are built, from architectural ambition to controversial funding and political strong-arming. Meanwhile, just outside the turnstiles of these commercial cathedrals, whole ecosystems flourish, buzzing with charming merch men and cutthroat ticket scalpers. Trips to Cleveland’s Progressive Field and Quicken Loans Arena illuminate such shadow economies, revealing the remarkable impact a team—and even just a single player (yes, we’re looking at you, LeBron James)—can have on an entire city. With infectious enthusiasm and wit, Kohan also explores the behind-the-scenes logistics and deeply ingrained traditions within these bustling facilities, cracking open a secret world of unforgettable characters—“groundskeepers, mascots, halftime performers” who work tirelessly to make the live event worth the price of admission. If you’ve ever wondered how they coordinate those fighter jet flyovers with the national anthem, how many hot dogs they serve in a day at Citi Field, how boozy pregame tailgates are kept in line, or what on earth AstroTurf is made of, look no further. As rowdy and rollicking as its subject, *The Arena* is a must-read for diehard fans, shameless bandwagoners, umpires, broadcasters, groundskeepers, culture junkies, tailgaters, and anyone else who’s ever eagerly headed off to the ballpark to catch a game.

## Book Information

File Size: 20030 KB

Print Length: 409 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 163149127X

Publisher: Liveright; 1 edition (August 8, 2017)

Publication Date: August 8, 2017

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01M6DXK7

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #71,482 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #19

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Miscellaneous > History of Sports #49

in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Sociology of Sports #116 in Books >

Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > History of Sports

## Customer Reviews

When "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" was written way back in 1908, a trip to the local ball yard was for the most part a joyful, affordable and entertaining experience. In those halcyon days, fans flocked to the ball park to cheer on the hometown nine. It was all about the game. Not so in 2017. People attending major sporting events these days expect to find gourmet food, amusements for the kids, spectacular fireworks displays and half-time shows, gorgeous cheerleaders, wi-fi availability and state-of-the-art graphics and sound. The teams are only too happy to oblige but fans pay a stiff price for all of these amenities. Meanwhile, ticket prices are now out of reach for a large segment of average Americans. What happened? How did big-time sports evolve from being a relatively simple spur-of-the-moment pleasure presented in rather modest facilities to the loud, grotesque and prohibitively expensive events they are today? Rafi Kohan spent an entire year of his life looking into the evolution of sporting events in America. He presents his findings in the entertaining new book "The Arena: Inside the Tailgating, Ticket-Scalping, Mascot-Racing, Dubiously Funded, and Possibly Haunted Monuments of American Sport." The book is a far-reaching, multi-faceted report on the state of American

sports today. It proves to be a real eye-opener. According to Kohan, one of the real game changers in the history of American sports occurred in 1953 when the Boston Braves moved to the very first publicly-funded stadium in Milwaukee. It would only be a few short years before other cities would follow suit. Over the next several decades dozens of new stadiums and arenas were built at taxpayer's expense. Rafi Kohan explains in considerable detail why public financing of stadiums and arenas has largely proven to be a very bad idea. In his travels Kohan visits with some of the people who work in the underbelly of these facilities seeing to it that the beer flows, the grass is green and the ice on the rink is just the right temperature. He also visits with tailgaters at Lambeau Field. Kohan's travels also took him to the two largest football stadiums in America, namely Beaver Stadium in State College, PA and Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor. Great stuff! I was interested in taking a look at "The Arena" because I am very "old school" when it comes to my sports. I simply do not want or need all of the distractions. I even hate mascots. But I am in the distinct minority here. Rafi Kohan does a workmanlike job of presenting the broad and diverse landscape of American sports today and what it takes to give the people what they want. Younger sports fans have clearly bought in to all of the hoopla and amenities. It does not appear that it is going to change anytime soon. I found "The Arena: Inside the Tailgating, Ticket-Scalping, Mascot-Racing, Dubiously Funded, and Possibly Haunted Monuments of American Sport" to be a thoughtful and very-well written book. This would be a good choice for sports fans and general readers alike. Recommended!

A fun and fascinating look at sports venues and all that happens in and around them. It's about so much more than the game!

I'm not a huge sports fan, but I found this book to be really enjoyable, particularly because of all the interesting characters that the author meets along the way. All in all, easy to read, informative (without being dry), and very funny.

What a multifaceted and fun combination of anthropology and investigative reporting that illuminates so much of how our society is changing! I just hope the author's mother doesn't read about his experience with the scalper with a knife against Rafi Kohan's back. When you read what the author thought during those moments, you'll understand why the book is so great. This book makes you feel you are there from the executive suites to especially the streets. I thought my wide reading had

given me a good idea of some of the subcultures that are covered in this book, but I gained a new and visceral sense of them. Professors of sociology, anthropology, business and public policy: assign this book and your students will actually read and enjoy it. It will provide great examples for discussion of issues and theories and you'll have better class discussions and course evaluations. This would also make a great book club book, again, great discussion potential about some worlds about which members probably know little, as well as new perspectives on those we think we do know.

You don't need to be a sports fan to enjoy this book. It was recommended to me by a friend as part of my summer/early fall reading list. The book has a lot of unique characters and funny narrative. I haven't traveled to most of these arenas, but I am fascinated by the spirit behind games and fans. I'll be picking up a copy for my little brother.

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