



Fourth and Long: The Fight for the Soul of College Football

John U. Bacon

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The *New York Times* bestseller about the state of college football: Why we love the game, what is at risk, and the fight to save it—“A fascinating saga” (*Booklist*).

In search of the sport’s old ideals amid the roaring flood of hypocrisy and greed, bestselling author John U. Bacon embedded himself in four college football programs—Penn State, Ohio State, Michigan, and Northwestern—and captured the oldest, biggest, most storied league, the Big Ten, at its tipping point. He sat in as coaches dissected game film, he ate dinner at training tables, and he listened in locker rooms. He talked with tailgating fans and college presidents, and he spent months in the company of the gifted young athletes who play the game.

Fourth and Long reveals intimate scenes behind closed doors, from a team’s angry face-off with their athletic director to a defensive lineman acing his master’s exams in theoretical math. It captures the private moment when coach Urban Meyer earned the devotion of Ohio State’s Buckeyes on their way to a perfect season. It shows Michigan’s athletic department endangering the very traditions that distinguish the college game from all others. And it re-creates the euphoria of the Northwestern Wildcats winning their first bowl game in decades. Most unforgettably, *Fourth and Long* finds what the national media missed in the ugly aftermath of Penn State’s tragic scandal: the unheralded story of players who joined forces with Coach Bill O’Brien to save the university’s treasured program—and with it, a piece of the game’s soul.

This is the work of a writer in love with an old game—a game he sees at the precipice. Bacon’s deep knowledge of sports history and his sensitivity to the tribal subcultures of the college game power this elegy to a beloved and endangered American institution.

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