



# The I in Team: Sports Fandom and the Reproduction of Identity

*Erin C. Tarver*

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## **The I in Team: Sports Fandom and the Reproduction of Identity** Erin C. Tarver

There is one sound that will always be loudest in sports. It isn't the squeak of sneakers or the crunch of helmets; it isn't the grunts or even the stadium music. It's the deafening roar of sports fans. For those few among us on the outside, sports fandom—with its war paint and pennants, its pricey cable TV packages and esoteric stats reeled off like code—looks highly irrational, entertainment gone overboard. But as Erin C. Tarver demonstrates in this book, sports fandom become extraordinarily important to our psyche, a matter of the very essence of who we are.

Why in the world, Tarver asks, would anyone care about how well a total stranger can throw a ball, or hit one with a bat, or toss one through a hoop? Because such activities and the massive public events that surround them form some of the most meaningful ritual identity practices we have today. They are a primary way we—as individuals and a collective—decide both who we are who we are not. And as such, they are also one of the key ways that various social structures—such as race and gender hierarchies—are sustained, lending a dark side to the joys of being a sports fan. Drawing on everything from philosophy to sociology to sports history, she offers a profound exploration of the significance of sports in contemporary life, showing us just how high the stakes of the game are.

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