



The Real All Americans

By Sally Jenkins

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The Real All Americans By Sally Jenkins

Sally Jenkins, bestselling co-author of *It's Not About the Bike*, revives a forgotten piece of history in *The Real All Americans*. In doing so, she has crafted a truly inspirational story about a Native American football team that is as much about football as Lance Armstrong's book was about a bike.

If you'd guess that Yale or Harvard ruled the college gridiron in 1911 and 1912, you'd be wrong. The most popular team belonged to an institution called the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Its story begins with Lt. Col. Richard Henry Pratt, a fierce abolitionist who believed that Native Americans deserved a place in American society. In 1879, Pratt made a treacherous journey to the Dakota Territory to recruit Carlisle's first students.

Years later, three students approached Pratt with the notion of forming a football team. Pratt liked the idea, and in less than twenty years the Carlisle football team was defeating their Ivy League opponents and in the process changing the way the game was played.

Sally Jenkins gives this story of unlikely champions a breathtaking immediacy. We see the legendary Jim Thorpe kicking a winning field goal, watch an injured Dwight D. Eisenhower limping off the field, and follow the glorious rise of Coach Glenn "Pop" Warner as well as his unexpected fall from grace.

The Real All Americans is about the end of a culture and the birth of a game that has thrilled Americans for generations. It is an inspiring reminder of the extraordinary things that can be achieved when we set aside our differences and embrace a common purpose.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this sprawling, heavily researched sports tale, author and Washington Post reporter Jenkins (*It's Not About the Bike*, with Lance Armstrong) covers more than a half-century—from mid-19th century battles between the U.S. Army and Native Americans to the 1918 closing of Pennsylvania's seminal Carlisle Indian Industrial School—telling the long-buried story of Carlisle's football team (the Indians, natch), which defied tradition and arguably did more to shape the modern collegiate game than any of its Ivy League competitors. Founded in 1879 by Army Lt. Col. Richard Pratt, an abolitionist who believed Native Americans deserved a visible place in U.S. society, Carlisle introduced fans and opponents to shoulder pads, the forward pass and the reverse option. Led by renowned coach Glenn "Pop" Warner and player Jim Thorpe, regarded as one of the greatest athletes America has produced, the Indians' struggles, especially with racial and political bigotry, prove surprisingly prescient (think Don Imus). That said, Jenkins shoehorns so much peripheral history that football often takes a back seat; in addition, her detached narration gives the book a term-paper feel, made all the more obvious by the enthusiasm and pride she details in her subjects.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—Jim Thorpe and Pop Warner may be familiar names, but it's unlikely that teens have heard of U.S. Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt or the Sioux leader American Horse. Jenkins introduces readers to these figures and others in her vivid social history of the decline of American Indian culture and the development of college football. Her lively writing features unbiased descriptions of major historical figures, thumbnail sketches of minor personalities, and cameos by Mark Twain and President Eisenhower. The book opens with familiar events—the battles between Native Americans and U.S. Army soldiers over Western territories and the abysmal treatment Native American tribes received at the hands of the government. Less widely known is Captain Pratt's dream of providing educational opportunities for Indians and his founding of the Carlisle Indian Training School in Pennsylvania. Jenkins's strength is in her sports writing; the most compelling sections of the book are descriptions of the Indians at Carlisle inventing new plays and prevailing against all odds in pivotal games against Harvard and West Point. The volume is enhanced by an eight-page spread of black-and-white photos with detailed captions. *All Americans* is a history book of heartbreakng stories that will appeal to teens interested in football or Native American history; it also has value as a narrative nonfiction supplement to the U.S. history curriculum.—*Sondra VanderPloeg, Tracy Memorial Library, New London, NH*

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From Booklist

Why do football fans remember Jim Thorpe but forget the school he played for? In the untold story of Carlisle Indian School, Jenkins uncovers a pivotal episode in the nation's history. Founded by an army captain intent on civilizing savages, Carlisle perpetuated oppressive policies that legitimated the subjugation of Native American tribes. Yet even as Carlisle humiliated students by forcing them to cut off their braids, it allowed them to exact an unexpected kind of vengeance: football. In a positively electric style, Jenkins recounts how Carlisle's undersized football squad stunned powerhouses such as Harvard and West Point. Of course, Thorpe figures prominently in Carlisle's triumphs. But so, too, do other Carlisle athletes—including halfback Alex Areas and quarterback Gus Welch—whose courage and guile embolden Coach "Pop" Warner in revolutionary innovations, such as the forward pass and the double-wing formation. Defying bigoted journalists and dishonest referees, Carlisle storms its way right into Teddy Roosevelt's White House. How often does a book attract both sports fans and cultural historians?^B Bryce Christensen

Users Review

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Candice Delgado:

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