Integrity of the Game

Integrity of the Game vs. Economic Impact

The Oklahoma Business Plan

Kenneth Crawford

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Dedication

For Brian— whose faith, kindness, and quiet strength continue to guide this work. This book is written in the space between what was lost and what must be carried forward, with gratitude for the life that shaped it and the integrity that endures.

Version Information

This edition reflects the finalized manuscript corresponding to the HVIOG Dataset v1.1 (locked February 05, 2026). Detailed dataset methodology appears in Appendix A.

How to Read This Book

This book is written as a systems analysis, not an exposé.

The chapters that follow examine how youth sports operate at scale—how tournaments are organized, how money moves, how facilities are used, and how responsibility is distributed across public and private actors. The focus throughout is on structure, incentives, and governance, rather than on individual behavior or isolated incidents.

Readers looking for allegations, accusations, or personal narratives will not find them here. Instead, this work relies on documentation, public records, and longitudinal analysis to show how informal practices become normalized when oversight frameworks fail to evolve alongside growth.

Several reflective sections appear toward the end of the book, including author's notes and song-based chapters. These are intentionally separated from the analytical core. They are included to acknowledge the human endurance, faith, and resolve that accompanied the research, not to serve as evidence or argument.

This book can be read linearly or by section. Policymakers and administrators may wish to focus on the chapters addressing governance gaps and reform pathways, while researchers may gravitate toward the methodological appendix. All readers are encouraged to approach the work as an invitation to clarity rather than a call to confrontation.

Added Section The Long Preparation

Long before the research documented in this book took formal shape, there was preparation—though it did not appear that way at the time. In the early 2000s, my involvement in youth baseball deepened through the Oklahoma Braves. Like many teams operating outside of well-funded programs, we relied on community effort to offset player costs. Fundraiser tournaments were organized not as profit-seeking ventures, but as practical solutions—ways to keep participation accessible while covering unavoidable expenses. Those early tournaments were modest, but they required structure. Fields had to be scheduled. Teams coordinated. Entry fees were collected. Officials were paid.

Records—however informal—were necessary simply to function. What stood out to me even then was not the money itself, but the systems around it. Small decisions had outsized effects.

Transparency reduced friction. Ambiguity created confusion. Trust worked best when supported by clarity. At the time, none of this felt unusual. It felt like problem-solving. Looking back, those experiences formed a foundation. They introduced questions that would later return with greater weight: Who is responsible when multiple parties are involved? How do informal practices scale? What happens when good intentions meet growing complexity? By the time Brian's automobile accident occurred on April 27, 2005, those questions were already present—though still unnamed. What followed did not begin the journey documented in this book, but it altered its direction and depth.

Loss has a way of sharpening perception. It does not create meaning, but it strips away distraction. In the years that followed, as involvement in facilities, nonprofits, and public partnerships expanded, the patterns first noticed in those early fundraising tournaments became impossible to ignore. The work that followed—datasets, records requests, analysis, and reform proposals—was not driven by hindsight

alone. It was built on years of exposure to how youth sports actually function when responsibility is shared, documentation is thin, and trust carries more weight than systems were designed to hold. This section exists to clarify that the research in this book did not emerge suddenly, nor solely from personal tragedy. It emerged from long preparation—quiet, incremental, and often unnoticed—before it was ever called research at all.

Introduction

Integrity of the Game vs. Economic Impact Youth sports in the United States are widely assumed to be community-driven, modest in scale, and governed primarily by volunteer leadership. Parents register their children, officials work weekend games, and facilities are presumed to operate under the oversight of public, nonprofit, or community-based entities. That assumption is no longer accurate. Over the last two decades, youth baseball and softball have evolved into a largely unregulated economic ecosystem—one that moves substantial sums of money through public, private, nonprofit, and tribal facilities with limited financial transparency and inconsistent governance. Despite the scale of this activity, there is no standardized reporting framework, no consolidated public dataset, and little shared understanding of how revenue is generated, distributed, or overseen. This book exists because that gap matters. I did not begin this work as an activist, journalist, or investigator. I began as a parent and volunteer coach. Later, I became a facility operator, tournament organizer, and nonprofit founder. Across those roles—and across multiple jurisdictions—I encountered the same operational patterns repeating regardless of leadership, geography, or organizational affiliation. These patterns were not ideological.

They were structural. The purpose of this book is not to accuse individuals or relitigate personal disputes. It is to document systems: how youth sports events are organized, how revenue is generated, how officials are compensated, and how facility owners—often public entities—are frequently the least informed participants in the process. The central question guiding this work is simple: How can communities govern what they cannot see?

This book, the accompanying public dataset, and the related podcast are designed to make visible what is typically hidden—replacing

assumption with documentation and enabling informed discussion grounded in verifiable records rather than anecdote or belief.

Appendix A: Dataset Methodology & Version Control Dataset Overview All quantitative findings presented in this book are grounded in the Hidden Valley / Integrity of the Game (HVIOG) Dataset v1.1, a longitudinal dataset documenting youth baseball and softball events held in Oklahoma from 2001 through 2025. Purpose and Design The dataset was constructed to document scale, structure, and flow of youth sports operations, not to assign intent or culpability. Data Sources All data was derived from publicly accessible records including event listings, registration counts, facility ownership records, and public financial disclosures. Scope and Timeframe Geographic Scope: Oklahoma Sports: Youth baseball and softball Timeframe: 2001–2025 Unit of Analysis Each event is treated as a discrete economic activity with divisions recorded separately where possible. Cash Operations & Limitations Cash-based operations are documented through defensible lower-bound indicators where direct verification is not possible. Dataset Locking HVIOG Dataset v1.1 was formally locked on February 05, 2026 as a read-only operational baseline. Interpretation Guidance The dataset functions as a map, not a verdict, enabling informed inquiry rather than prescriptive conclusions. Applicability Beyond Oklahoma While geographically bounded, the operational model documented is replicable nationwide.

Part I

Structural Framework

Chapter 1

Why I Started Looking

I did not set out to study youth sports as an industry. I did not intend to build datasets, file regulatory complaints, or write a book. Like many parents, my entry point into youth baseball was personal and practical. I volunteered because my child wanted to play, because teams needed coaches, and because youth sports were presented as a safe and positive extension of community life. For years, that assumption held. Practices were informal.

Games were local. Adults volunteered their time, and the focus—at least on the surface—remained on kids learning the game. The financial aspects of youth sports existed, but they were peripheral and largely unquestioned. That changed as my involvement deepened. As I took on additional roles—organizing tournaments, operating facilities, coordinating officials, and working within nonprofit structures—I began to see patterns that were invisible from the sidelines. Decisions that appeared casual were in fact structural. Financial flows that were treated as routine were rarely documented. Oversight was often assumed, but seldom defined. I encountered these patterns across different organizations, facilities, and jurisdictions. They were not limited to a single league, city, or group of individuals. In municipal complexes, county-owned properties, school facilities, nonprofit operations, and tribal venues, the same operational model repeated

with remarkable consistency. The model relied heavily on independent operators, informal financial controls, and a cultural acceptance of cash-based transactions. Facility owners—often public entities entrusted with stewardship responsibilities—frequently lacked access to basic information about how events were structured or how revenue was generated and distributed on their property.

What stood out was not malice, but normalization. Practices that would be unacceptable in other public-facing industries were treated as ordinary in youth sports. Payments were made without documentation. Contracts were vague or nonexistent. Financial responsibility was diffused across multiple parties, making accountability difficult to assign and easy to avoid. Over time, these observations raised a question that became impossible to ignore: if no one is clearly responsible for oversight, who is accountable when problems arise? This question did not emerge from a single incident. It emerged from repetition. From seeing the same gaps recur regardless of good intentions or individual competence. From realizing that even well-meaning administrators were operating within a system that provided little guidance, few guardrails, and no shared framework for transparency. At a certain point, observation alone was no longer sufficient. Understanding the scope of the system required documentation—records that could be examined independently of personal experience or anecdote. That realization marked the beginning of this research. What started as an effort to understand isolated operational decisions became a broader examination of how youth sports function as an economic ecosystem. The work expanded from individual facilities to statewide patterns, from individual events to longitudinal trends. This chapter explains why I started looking. The chapters that follow explain what became visible once I did.

Chapter 2

Youth Sports as an Unregulated Industry

Youth sports are commonly framed as recreational activities supported by volunteers and modest participation fees. This framing obscures the reality that, in many regions, youth baseball and softball now operate as a decentralized industry with substantial economic activity and minimal formal regulation.

Unlike other youth-serving industries that interact with public facilities, youth sports typically fall between regulatory categories. They are neither fully commercial enterprises nor traditional public programs. As a result, no single oversight body is clearly responsible for setting financial standards, enforcing transparency, or monitoring operational practices. This ambiguity creates space for informal systems to become normalized.

Tournament operators often function as independent businesses while relying on public or quasi-public infrastructure. Facility owners provide land, utilities, and maintenance, yet frequently lack visibility into how events are priced, how revenue is collected, or how labor is compensated. The absence of standardized reporting requirements is a defining feature of this environment. Entry fees, gate admissions, and officiating payments may be publicly advertised, privately negotiated, or informally handled, depending on the event and operator.

Documentation practices vary widely, and in many cases, records remain fragmented or inaccessible. In regulated industries, such fragmentation would trigger audit requirements or compliance reviews. In youth sports, it is treated as customary. The presumption of good intent substitutes for formal accountability mechanisms. This structure is reinforced by the seasonal and transient nature of events. Tournaments occur over short timeframes, often involving participants from multiple jurisdictions. Revenue is generated quickly and dispersed just as quickly, reducing the likelihood of sustained oversight or post-event reconciliation. Another defining characteristic is the reliance on independent contractors for core functions, including officiating and event management. While this model offers flexibility, it also diffuses responsibility. When questions arise regarding compensation practices or financial controls, accountability is often unclear. Facility ownership further complicates the picture. Municipalities, counties, school districts, nonprofits, and tribal entities may each host events under different legal frameworks. Yet the operational model remains largely consistent across these contexts, suggesting that the issue is structural rather than jurisdiction-specific. The result is an industry that generates significant economic activity without corresponding governance infrastructure. Decisions affecting public resources are frequently made through informal agreements rather than transparent processes. This chapter does not argue that youth sports should be heavily regulated in the manner of large commercial enterprises. It does argue that the current absence of baseline standards leaves communities without the tools needed to understand or manage the economic activity occurring on their facilities. Recognizing youth sports as an industry is a necessary first step. Without that recognition, discussions of transparency, accountability, and reform lack a shared foundation. The chapters that follow examine how this unregulated structure manifests in practice—beginning with how money moves through the system.

Chapter 3

How the Money Moves

Understanding youth sports as an industry requires a clear view of how money enters, circulates within, and exits the system.

While individual events may appear modest, the cumulative effect across seasons, facilities, and jurisdictions produces substantial economic activity. The primary entry point for revenue is the team registration or entry fee. These fees are typically advertised publicly and collected in advance of competition. They are often framed as covering basic costs such as field use, scheduling, and administrative support. In practice, entry fees function as the initial capital that enables events to operate. Beyond entry fees, many events rely on gate admissions. Gate fees are commonly collected per person or per vehicle and are paid at the facility during the event. Unlike entry fees, gate admissions are frequently handled on-site and, in many cases, in cash.

Documentation practices vary widely, and reconciliation is not always transparent to facility owners. A third revenue-related component involves officiating compensation. Officials are typically paid per game and are commonly classified as independent contractors. Payment structures differ by event and location, but compensation is often distributed during or immediately after competition, sometimes from gate proceeds. These three elements—entry fees, gate admissions, and officiating payments—form the core financial loop of

most youth sports events. Additional revenue streams, such as concessions or merchandise, may exist but are often operated separately from tournament management. Once collected, funds move through a decentralized network of operators. Tournament directors or organizing entities determine how entry fees are allocated, which expenses are covered, and what portion, if any, is retained as compensation. Facility owners may receive rental payments or revenue shares, but these arrangements are not uniform. The lack of standardized accounting practices complicates visibility. Facility owners may see aggregate payments without access to underlying event-level data. In some cases, multiple events occur on the same property under different operators, each with distinct financial arrangements. Because events are short-lived, reconciliation often occurs, if at all, after participants have departed. This temporal disconnect reduces opportunities for oversight and increases reliance on trust rather than verification. Cash handling introduces additional opacity. Where gate admissions are collected in cash, the ability to audit transactions depends on voluntary reporting. Even when electronic payment systems are used, data ownership and access are not always clearly defined. Independent contractor classification further diffuses responsibility. Officials and event staff are paid by operators who may themselves be independent of the facility owner. This layering makes it difficult to trace funds from source to endpoint. None of these practices are inherently improper. They reflect operational convenience and historical precedent. The issue arises when scale increases without corresponding governance. As events proliferate and revenue grows, the absence of baseline transparency standards becomes consequential. Public entities may host dozens or hundreds of events annually without a consolidated understanding of financial activity on their property. The purpose of this chapter is not to prescribe a single financial model. It is to clarify the pathways through which money moves

so that subsequent chapters can examine where oversight succeeds, where it fails, and what alternatives exist. With these pathways defined, the discussion can move from abstraction to application—

beginning with how facilities experience these financial structures in practice.

Chapter 4

Facilities Without Oversight

The financial pathways described in the previous chapter operate within physical spaces—ballfields, complexes, and athletic facilities owned or controlled by public and quasi-public entities. These facilities are the foundation of youth sports operations, yet they are often the least informed participants in the economic activity occurring on their property. Municipal parks departments, county governments, school districts, nonprofit foundations, and tribal entities routinely host youth sports events. In doing so, they provide land, infrastructure, utilities, and maintenance. They also assume liability and reputational risk. What they frequently do not possess is a complete picture of how events are structured financially. Facility oversight is commonly delegated through permits, leases, or informal agreements. These instruments typically focus on access and scheduling rather than financial transparency. As a result, facility owners may know when fields are in use without knowing how much revenue is generated during that use. This gap is not always intentional. Many facility administrators are tasked with managing a wide range of programs with limited staff and resources. Youth sports events are often treated as routine activities rather than discrete economic transactions requiring documentation. The complexity increases when facilities host multiple operators. A single complex may be used by different tournament directors

across weekends or even within the same weekend. Each operator may employ different pricing structures, payment methods, and compensation models, further fragmenting oversight. In some cases, facility owners receive flat rental fees or percentage-based arrangements. In others, access is granted in exchange for assumed community benefit, such as increased tourism or participation. These arrangements are rarely standardized and may evolve informally over time. School-owned facilities introduce additional considerations. Events held on school property often rely on existing infrastructure funded by public education dollars. Yet the financial activity associated with those events may be managed entirely by external operators, with limited reporting back to the school district. Tribal and nonprofit facilities operate under distinct legal frameworks but often mirror the same operational model. While governance structures differ, the reliance on independent operators and informal financial controls remains consistent. The result across facility types is a pattern of partial visibility. Owners can observe activity but lack access to underlying financial data. This limits their ability to evaluate whether arrangements align with public interest, cost recovery, or long-term sustainability. Without baseline reporting standards, facility oversight becomes reactive rather than proactive. Questions arise only when problems surface—complaints, disputes, or financial shortfalls—rather than as part of routine governance. This chapter does not suggest that facility owners are neglectful or uninformed by choice. It suggests that the system has evolved without providing them the tools necessary for effective oversight. Understanding this structural limitation is essential before examining specific case studies. The absence of oversight is not a failure of individual facilities; it is a feature of the broader operational model. The chapters that follow examine how this lack of oversight manifests across different ownership contexts and what lessons can be drawn from those experiences.

Part II

Ownership Contexts

Chapter 5

Case Studies: Municipal Facilities

Municipal facilities represent one of the most common ownership models in youth sports. Cities and towns invest public funds in land acquisition, field construction, lighting, utilities, and maintenance with the expectation that these assets will serve community needs. In practice, municipal complexes often function as host sites for independently operated tournaments.

This arrangement can deliver participation opportunities and visitor traffic, but it also introduces a separation between ownership and operations that complicates oversight. City parks departments typically manage scheduling, maintenance, and access. Tournament operators manage registration, pricing, and game administration. While these roles are complementary, they are rarely integrated through shared reporting systems. In many municipalities, agreements with tournament operators emphasize access and use rather than financial transparency. Permits or leases may specify dates and fields without requiring detailed post-event financial summaries. As a result, cities may track field utilization but not the scale of economic activity occurring on their property. Entry fees, gate admissions, and officiating payments are handled externally, often without standardized reconciliation. The issue becomes more pronounced when municipal facilities host high volumes of events. Over a season, dozens of tourna-

ments may occur, each generating revenue through similar pathways but under different operators. From a governance perspective, this fragmentation limits the city's ability to evaluate cost recovery, assess wear and tear, or understand the true return on public investment. Decisions about staffing, capital improvements, and pricing are made without complete information. Municipal officials frequently rely on assumptions of community benefit, such as increased tourism or local spending. While these benefits may exist, they are seldom measured against documented event-level data. The case studies examined in this chapter illustrate how this model operates across different municipal contexts. They are presented not to single out specific cities, but to demonstrate recurring structural patterns. In each case, the absence of standardized financial reporting—not the intent of local administrators—emerges as the central challenge. These examples provide a foundation for understanding how similar dynamics appear in county, school, and other publicly controlled facilities discussed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6

County & School Properties

County-owned and school-owned properties occupy a unique position in the youth sports ecosystem. Unlike municipal facilities that often fall under parks and recreation departments, these properties are governed by entities whose primary missions are not athletics, yet they regularly host competitive events with significant economic activity. County governments may own or manage sports complexes, fairgrounds, or multi-use recreational spaces. These facilities are often overseen by boards of county commissioners or appointed administrators whose responsibilities span infrastructure, public safety, and fiscal stewardship. Youth sports events represent only a small portion of their broader portfolio. As a result, county-hosted tournaments are frequently evaluated through an access or scheduling lens rather than as discrete economic activities. Oversight mechanisms tend to focus on facility use agreements, insurance, and maintenance responsibilities, while financial reporting remains limited.

School-owned properties introduce additional layers of complexity. School districts operate under strict funding and accountability requirements tied to educational outcomes. Athletic facilities are typically constructed and maintained using public education dollars, bonds, or dedicated tax revenues. When external tournament operators use school facilities, the economic activity associated with those

events is often managed independently of the district. Entry fees, gate admissions, and officiating payments may flow through private channels without routine reporting back to the school system. This separation can obscure the true cost and benefit of hosting events. Utilities, custodial services, and field maintenance are borne by the school or disrict, while revenue generation occurs externally. Without standardized reporting, districts may lack the data needed to assess cost recovery or resource impact. Liability and risk management further complicate oversight. School districts and counties assume liability exposure when hosting events, yet they may have limited visibility into operational decisions that influence safety, staffing, or crowd management. In some cases, long-standing relationships between districts and local sports organizations normalize informal arrangements.

Access is granted based on tradition or perceived community benefit rather than documented performance metrics. These practices are not necessarily the result of neglect. They reflect the absence of a governance framework tailored to the intersection of public property and privately organized youth sports. Across county and school contexts, a consistent pattern emerges: economic activity occurs on public land without corresponding financial transparency. The lack of standardized agreements or reporting requirements leaves decision-makers without the information necessary to evaluate long-term sustainability. The case studies referenced later in this book demonstrate how these dynamics manifest in practice. They highlight the challenges faced by county commissioners, school administrators, and boards attempting to balance community access with fiduciary responsibility. Recognizing these structural limitations is a prerequisite to reform. Without acknowledging the unique governance challenges posed by county and school properties, efforts to improve transparency and accountability will remain fragmented. The next chapter examines how similar patterns appear in tribal and nonprofit facilities, where distinct legal frameworks intersect with the same operational model.

Chapter 7

Tribal & Nonprofit Facilities

Tribal and nonprofit facilities occupy a distinct position within the youth sports ecosystem. They operate under legal and governance frameworks that differ from municipal, county, and school-owned properties, yet they frequently host events that follow the same operational model observed elsewhere. Tribal facilities are governed by sovereign nations with their own regulatory authority. This sovereignty provides flexibility in how facilities are managed, leased, and operated. At the same time, it can create uncertainty for external organizers and participants who are unfamiliar with tribal governance structures. In practice, youth sports events hosted on tribal land are often organized by independent tournament operators who apply standardized practices developed outside the tribal context. Entry fees, gate admissions, and officiating compensation typically mirror those used at municipal or county complexes. Facility agreements may emphasize access, scheduling, and liability considerations while leaving financial reporting largely to the discretion of the operator. As with other facility types, this can limit visibility into event-level revenue and expenditures. Nonprofit-owned facilities present a different set of expectations. Nonprofits are often established with community-oriented missions and may benefit from tax-exempt status. When these entities host youth sports events, they are frequently perceived

as operating for public benefit rather than commercial gain. Despite these perceptions, nonprofit facilities may rely on the same independent operators and financial structures as for-profit or publicly owned venues. Revenue generated through events may pass through multiple entities before reaching the facility owner, if it reaches them at all.

The combination of mission-driven governance and informal operational practices can complicate oversight. Boards may focus on programming and outreach while delegating event management to external partners with limited reporting requirements. In both tribal and nonprofit contexts, the assumption of good intent often substitutes for formal accountability mechanisms. This is not unique to these ownership models, but it can be amplified by the trust placed in mission-driven organizations. The HVIOG dataset demonstrates that events hosted on tribal and nonprofit facilities follow the same structural patterns observed elsewhere. The differences lie in legal authority, not in operational practice. This convergence highlights a key finding of the research: governance gaps are not confined to any single ownership model. They emerge wherever economic activity outpaces the oversight structures designed to manage it. Understanding tribal and nonprofit facilities within this broader pattern is essential to developing reforms that respect sovereignty and mission while improving transparency. The next chapter synthesizes these case studies to examine what happens when responsibility is shared, diffused, or undefined across multiple entities.

Part III

Governance Gaps

Chapter 8

When Nobody Is in Charge

Across municipal, county, school, tribal, and nonprofit facilities, a consistent pattern emerges: responsibility for youth sports operations is distributed across multiple entities, yet accountability is rarely centralized. No single actor controls the full lifecycle of an event. Facility owners provide access and infrastructure. Tournament operators manage registration and scheduling. Officials supply labor. Sanctioning bodies offer branding or rulesets. Each participant controls a portion of the process, but none are positioned to oversee it end to end. This fragmentation creates an accountability gap. When financial, safety, or governance concerns arise, responsibility is often redirected rather than resolved. Facility owners may defer to operators. Operators may cite independent contractors.

Sanctioning bodies may assert limited authority over local practices. Such diffusion is not necessarily intentional. It is the result of incremental arrangements layered over time, each addressing immediate needs without a comprehensive governance framework. In regulated industries, diffuse responsibility is counterbalanced by standardized reporting, audits, and compliance requirements. In youth sports, these counterweights are largely absent. The result is a system in which no single entity possesses both the authority and the information required to intervene proactively. Oversight becomes reactive, triggered

by complaints or crises rather than routine review. This structure also complicates reform efforts. Changes proposed by one stakeholder may fall outside their jurisdiction or be resisted by others who do not perceive direct responsibility.

Parents and participants, meanwhile, often assume that oversight exists somewhere within the system. This assumption persists precisely because accountability failures are not immediately visible. The HVIOG dataset illustrates how this pattern repeats across hundreds of events over multiple decades. The consistency of the pattern suggests a systemic issue rather than isolated mismanagement. When nobody is clearly in charge, outcomes depend heavily on individual ethics and informal norms. While many actors operate in good faith, systems built on trust alone are vulnerable as scale increases. This chapter does not argue for centralized control over youth sports. It argues for clarity—clear roles, clear reporting expectations, and clear lines of responsibility. Without such clarity, accountability remains diffuse, and opportunities for improvement remain unrealized.

The next chapters examine what happens when stakeholders attempt to introduce oversight and how systems respond when questions are formally raised.

Chapter 9

Escalation & Oversight Pathways

When accountability gaps persist, stakeholders often seek resolution through formal oversight mechanisms. These pathways—audits, complaints, and regulatory inquiries—are designed to address issues that cannot be resolved within existing operational structures. In the context of youth sports, escalation typically occurs only after informal remedies fail.

Facility administrators, parents, or community members may raise questions internally before turning to external authorities. Local oversight bodies are often the first point of escalation.

Municipal councils, county commissioners, or school boards may receive inquiries regarding facility use, financial practices, or contractual arrangements. However, these bodies may lack specialized knowledge of youth sports operations, limiting their ability to assess concerns. When local oversight proves insufficient, stakeholders may pursue state-level review. Offices such as state attorneys general, auditors, or ethics commissions are tasked with evaluating compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Their involvement introduces formal investigative standards but also narrows the scope to legal thresholds. Federal oversight pathways represent another layer. Agencies responsible for tax administration, labor classification, or public integrity may become involved when issues intersect with federal stat-

utes. These processes are structured, methodical, and often lengthy. Escalation carries inherent challenges. Oversight bodies rely on documentation. In systems where records are fragmented or informal, establishing facts can be difficult. The absence of standardized reporting complicates investigative efforts and may limit outcomes.

Another challenge is jurisdictional overlap. Youth sports operations often span multiple legal contexts—public property, private operators, nonprofit entities, and independent contractors. Determining which authority has standing can delay or diffuse review. It is important to distinguish escalation from accusation. Seeking oversight is not an assertion of wrongdoing; it is a request for clarity. Yet escalation is frequently perceived as adversarial, which can discourage stakeholders from pursuing it. The HVIOG dataset demonstrates that escalation pathways are rarely triggered proactively. Instead, they emerge in response to disputes, financial stress, or public controversy. This reactive posture underscores the need for preventive governance. This chapter does not evaluate the outcomes of specific oversight actions. It examines the pathways themselves—their structure, limitations, and role within the broader system. Understanding these pathways is essential for meaningful reform. Without clear mechanisms for review and resolution, systemic issues remain unresolved. The chapters that follow explore what effective transparency looks like and how governance structures can be redesigned to reduce the need for escalation.

Chapter 10

What Transparency Actually Looks Like

Calls for transparency in youth sports are common, but they are often abstract. Stakeholders may agree that transparency is desirable without articulating what it requires in practice. As a result, transparency becomes a rhetorical goal rather than an operational standard. Effective transparency begins with defining the minimum information necessary for oversight. This includes event-level data that allows facility owners and governing bodies to understand how public resources are being used. At a basic level, transparency requires standardized reporting of event schedules, participating teams, entry fees, and gate admissions. These elements establish the scope of activity and provide context for financial flows. Financial transparency does not require disclosure of proprietary strategies or competitive details. It requires clear accounting of revenues generated on public property and how those revenues are allocated. Equally important is labor transparency. When officials and event staff are compensated as independent contractors, facility owners and oversight bodies should have access to aggregate information regarding compensation practices and payment methods.

Transparency also involves clarity of roles. Written agreements should specify who is responsible for registration, fee collection, pay-

ment of officials, and post-event reporting. Ambiguity in these areas undermines accountability. Technology can facilitate transparency when implemented thoughtfully. Digital registration systems, electronic payments, and standardized reporting templates reduce reliance on informal practices and improve record retention.

However, technology alone is insufficient. Transparency depends on governance expectations. Without requirements tied to permits, leases, or facility use agreements, reporting remains voluntary and inconsistent. Effective models integrate transparency into access. Use of public facilities is conditioned on compliance with basic reporting standards. This aligns incentives without imposing excessive administrative burden. Importantly, transparency should be proportional to scale. Small, local events may require minimal reporting, while high-volume tournaments warrant more detailed summaries. The goal is not surveillance. It is stewardship. Transparency enables facility owners to make informed decisions, evaluate cost recovery, and plan for long-term sustainability. The HVIOG dataset demonstrates that where transparency is absent, oversight becomes reactive.

Where baseline reporting exists, issues are identified earlier and addressed more effectively. This chapter provides a foundation for the reforms discussed next. By clarifying what transparency looks like in practice, it becomes possible to redesign systems that reduce conflict and improve trust.

Chapter 11

Salary vs. Cash

The compensation of officials and event staff sits at the center of youth sports operations. How this labor is paid—whether through structured payroll systems or informal cash distributions—shapes transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

Cash-based compensation has historically been favored for its simplicity. Officials are paid per game, often at the conclusion of play. This model reduces administrative burden for operators and provides immediate payment for workers. However, as event volume and scale increase, the limitations of cash compensation become pronounced. Cash transactions are difficult to document, reconcile, and audit. They rely heavily on trust and informal controls. In contrast, salary or payroll-based models introduce structure. Compensation is recorded, taxes are withheld where applicable, and payments are traceable. These systems create records that support oversight without requiring intrusive monitoring. The distinction is not merely administrative. It affects classification of labor, compliance with tax and employment laws, and the ability of facility owners to understand labor costs associated with events hosted on their property. In cash-based systems, officials are commonly classified as independent contractors. While this classification may be appropriate in some contexts, its widespread use often reflects convenience rather than careful legal analysis. Sala-

ry-based or structured compensation models do not require officials to become full-time employees. Hybrid approaches—such as seasonal payroll or third-party staffing services—can balance flexibility with accountability. From a governance perspective, the choice between salary and cash influences risk. Cash systems increase exposure to misclassification, underreporting, and dispute resolution challenges. Structured systems mitigate these risks by design. Importantly, moving away from cash does not require eliminating per-game compensation. It requires channeling those payments through documented systems that preserve flexibility while improving visibility. The HVIOG dataset illustrates the scale at which cash-based officiating operates. While individual payments may be modest, the aggregate volume across events and seasons is significant. Reform in this area often encounters resistance rooted in tradition. Officials may prefer cash for immediacy. Operators may prefer it for simplicity. Yet tradition alone is insufficient justification as systems scale. This chapter does not prescribe a single compensation model. It outlines the tradeoffs and demonstrates why structured payment systems better align with transparency goals. The final chapter translates these principles into a practical roadmap for communities seeking to modernize youth sports operations without disrupting participation.

Part IV

Reform

Chapter 12

A Path Forward for Communities

The preceding chapters document how youth sports operate as an economic system, where governance has not kept pace with scale. Reform does not require dismantling youth sports or imposing excessive regulation. It requires practical steps that align transparency, accountability, and community values. A meaningful path forward begins with recognition. Communities must acknowledge that youth sports events hosted on public or quasi-public facilities constitute economic activity that warrants basic oversight. This recognition reframes governance as stewardship rather than intervention. The first step is establishing baseline transparency standards tied to facility access. Use of public facilities should be conditioned on minimal reporting requirements, including event schedules, team counts, entry fees, and aggregate gate admissions. These standards should be proportional to event size and volume. Second, communities should modernize payment systems. Transitioning from cash-based transactions to documented payment channels improves visibility without disrupting operations. Hybrid models can preserve flexibility while creating records necessary for oversight. Third, roles and responsibilities must be clarified through written agreements. Permits, leases, and use agreements should define who collects fees, who pays officials, and who provides post-event reporting. Clarity reduces conflict and improves

compliance. Fourth, oversight should be centralized where possible. Designating a single point of accountability within a city, county, school district, or tribal entity ensures that information is reviewed consistently rather than fragmented across departments.

Fifth, data should inform decisions. Aggregated event data allows communities to evaluate cost recovery, assess infrastructure impact, and plan capital improvements. Transparency enables evidence-based policymaking. Importantly, reform should be phased. Communities can implement changes over a defined period, allowing operators and officials time to adapt. A 90-day implementation window provides a realistic starting point. These reforms do not require adversarial enforcement. They rely on aligning incentives with access. Operators who comply gain continued use of facilities; those who do not are subject to graduated restrictions. The goal is not control, but trust. When stakeholders share information, misunderstandings decrease and collaboration improves. The HVIOG dataset provides a blueprint for what visibility looks like at scale. Communities need not replicate the dataset to benefit from its lessons; they can adopt its principles locally. This book closes with an invitation rather than a conclusion. Youth sports remain a vital part of community life. By modernizing governance, communities can protect that role while ensuring that public resources are managed responsibly. The path forward is available. It requires commitment, clarity, and the willingness to replace assumption with documentation.

Author's Note

"Picking Up the Pieces" was created after much of the research in this book had already been completed. By that point, the datasets were built, the documents reviewed, and the patterns clearly established. What remained difficult to articulate—at least through formal analysis—was the personal weight of carrying that work forward over time. The lyrics were generated by cross-referencing the projects folder that underpins this book: years of correspondence, contracts, public records, meeting notes, and reflective writing that documented not only institutional processes, but the emotional and moral strain that accompanied them. The song does not summarize findings, nor does it advance new claims. Instead, it reflects the lived experience of persistence when trust fractures and systems resist transparency. Music provided a different language—one capable of holding ambiguity, fatigue, faith, and resolve simultaneously. Lines such as "every scar shows the pain and the progression" were not written for effect, but as shorthand for a reality familiar to anyone who has remained committed to reform after encountering resistance. This book is intentionally restrained in tone. It prioritizes documentation over narrative and systems over personalities. The inclusion of this song, and the chapter that follows, is not a departure from that discipline, but a complement to it. Research is conducted by people, and people absorb the consequences of what they uncover. The Author's Note exists to clarify that "Picking Up the Pieces" is not offered as testimony or proof, but as reflection. It marks the point at which analysis gives way to alignment—between values, evidence, and purpose—and it acknowledges that integrity is sustained not only through policy and procedure, but through the decision to continue.

Added Chapter Picking Up the Pieces

Some parts of this work could only be expressed in prose—datasets, governance models, financial pathways, and institutional failures documented through records and analysis. Other parts resisted that structure. "Picking Up the Pieces" emerged from that resistance. The song was not written as commentary on a single event, nor as a response to one setback or conflict. Its lyrics were developed by cross-referencing years of documented experiences contained in the projects folder—emails, contracts, public records, conversations, and personal reflections that marked the long arc of this research.

What the song captures is not an argument, but a process. The opening lines reflect the origin story shared throughout this book: beginning with a vision rooted in service, community, and the simple belief that youth sports could be built with integrity. Started out with just a dream building fields and finding teams... That dream encountered reality. Not abstract resistance, but lived experience—fractured trust, institutional opacity, and moments where the systems examined in earlier chapters revealed their human consequences. The cracks appeared. The trust would fail. This book documents how governance gaps form structurally.

The song documents what that feels like personally. The two are inseparable. Where earlier chapters describe fragmentation of responsibility, the lyrics describe weight—emotional, moral, and spiritual—carried quietly, often alone.

Every scar shows the pain and the progression. Faith appears in the lyrics not as abstraction, but as grounding. Not as escape from responsibility, but as the reason responsibility was carried forward rather than abandoned. The closing lines of the song echo the conclusion of this manuscript—not as victory, but as alignment between values, documentation, and purpose. This chapter exists to acknowledge that research does not occur in a vacuum. Systems shape people,

and people carry systems forward. “Picking Up the Pieces” stands as a reminder that integrity is measured not only in policies and procedures, but in the willingness to continue—carefully, faithfully, and transparently—after trust has been tested. It is not a conclusion. It is a continuation.

Author's Note – Brian's Songs

Author's Note The songs Brian recorded were never intended for publication. They were created privately, often late at night, and preserved not as finished compositions but as moments of expression. They reflect a faith that was personal, unpolished, and sincere. These recordings were discovered on Brian's computer after his automobile accident. Listening to them revealed a consistent theme—not performance, but presence.

The songs do not explain theology or narrate experience. They return repeatedly to trust, surrender, and reliance on Jesus as an anchor. In considering whether to include Brian's songs in this book, I was mindful of the responsibility that comes with sharing something so personal. They are not offered as interpretation, evidence, or illustration of the research contained in these chapters. They exist alongside it, not within it. Brian's songs speak to a dimension of integrity that precedes systems and outlasts them. Where this book documents governance failures and pathways for reform, his music reflects the interior posture that made endurance possible when answers were incomplete.

This Author's Note exists to clarify intention. Brian's voice is included here not to resolve grief or to explain loss, but to bear witness to faith as it was lived—quietly, consistently, and without audience. It is shared with care, and with gratitude.

Added Chapter With You Again (A Song by Brian)

Brian wrote songs the way some people pray—without performance and without explanation. They were not composed for an audience or refined for clarity. They were offered. The recording this chapter draws from was oneof several found on Brian's computer after his automobile accident. Like others he recorded, it centers on a single, recurring truth rather than a linear story. The lyrics return again and again to faith, surrender, and presence. Jesus, this world I will not fear. Jesus, I will shed no more tears. 'Cause Jesus, my Savior is here. The repetition is intentional. These lines are not trying to persuade; they are grounding. They reflect a confidence that does not depend on circumstances, outcomes, or explanations. Throughout this book, integrity has been examined through systems—how governance fragments, how trust erodes when documentation disappears, how responsibility becomes diffuse. Brian's song exists outside that framework. It speaks to something that does not need to be reconstructed or defended. All of my days searching for You... To change my ways... There is no pretense of certainty here, only direction. Faith is not presented as arrival, but as orientation. At several points, the lyrics acknowledge vulnerability without dwelling in it: With You, my life is... But without You, I just might slip in...

The phrases trail off—not because they are unfinished, but because completion is not the point. Worship does not require resolution. Near the end of the song, the focus turns forward—not toward explanation, but toward beginning: And now I know where to begin... To make my way to heaven. This is not a statement about perfection or escape. It is about direction—about knowing where to place one's steps when the world feels uncertain. This book documents systems and offers pathways for reform. Brian's song is included here not to in-

terpret those findings, but to acknowledge something the research itself cannot contain: the presence of hope that existed before the work began, and remains independent of its conclusions. This chapter does not explain loss. It does not justify suffering. It does not resolve questions. It simply bears witness to faith. And sometimes, that is where to begin.

Disclaimer

This book is a work of nonfiction based on research, public records, historical documents, interviews, datasets, and the author's personal experiences. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at the time of publication. However, the information presented reflects the author's interpretation and analysis of available materials and should not be considered definitive legal, financial, or professional advice.

The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the official positions of any organization, institution, government entity, athletic association, school district, nonprofit organization, or individual referenced herein.

Certain names, identifying details, timelines, or contextual elements may have been abbreviated, summarized, or presented for narrative clarity. Where applicable, information has been derived from publicly available sources or documented firsthand experiences.

This book discusses systemic governance structures, financial models, regulatory frameworks, and operational patterns. It is not intended to accuse, defame, or malign any specific person or entity. Any perceived resemblance to actual misconduct is based solely on documented sources and the author's analytical conclusions.

Readers are encouraged to conduct their own due diligence and consult qualified professionals before making legal, financial, or policy decisions based on information contained in this publication.

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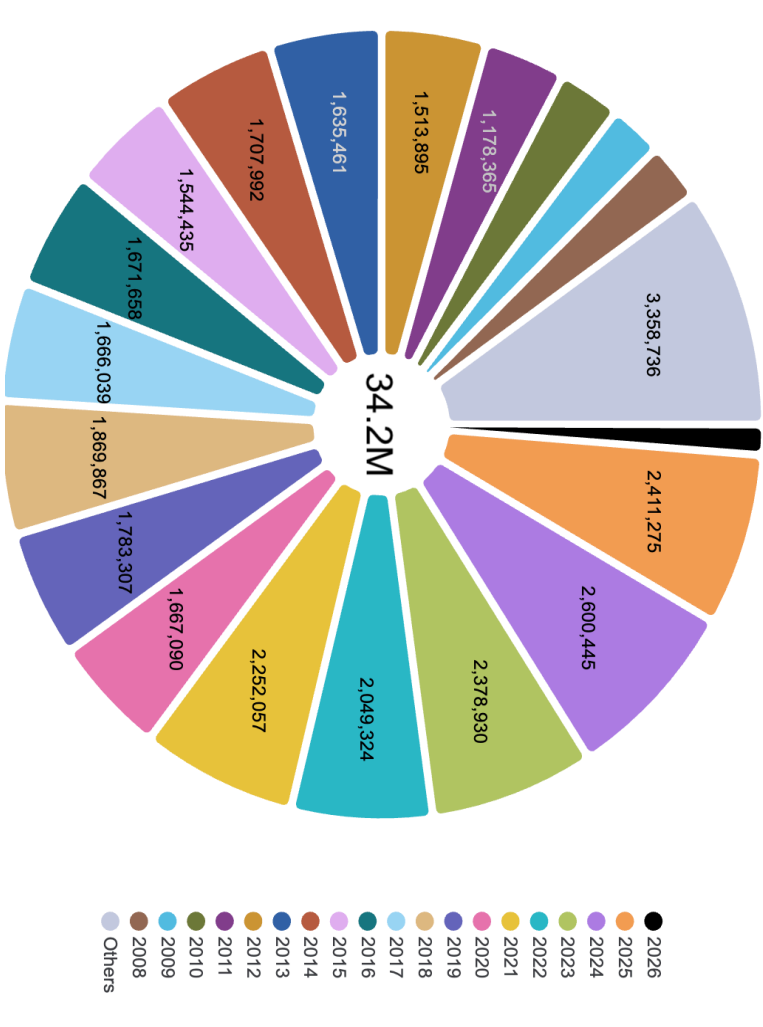
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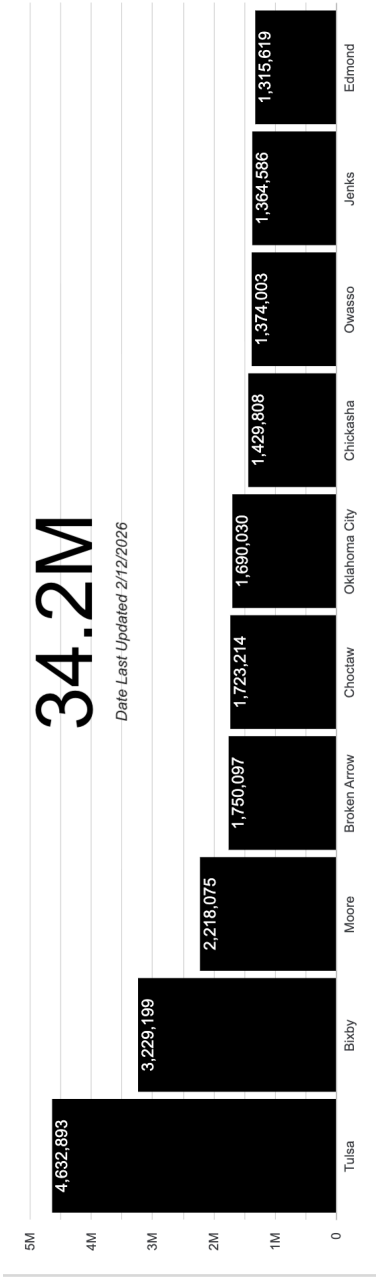
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