

## COMMON ENEMIES

### Georgetown Basketball, Miami Football, and the Racial Transformation of College Sports

THOMAS F. SCHALLER

“Thomas Schaller’s *Common Enemies* demonstrates with a searing clarity how racism and rebellion as well as backlash and triumph all existed in the sports world’s recent history before we were wise enough to comprehend their implications. By doing so, Schaller fills a gap in our collective sports consciousness.”—Dave Zirin, sports editor of the *Nation*

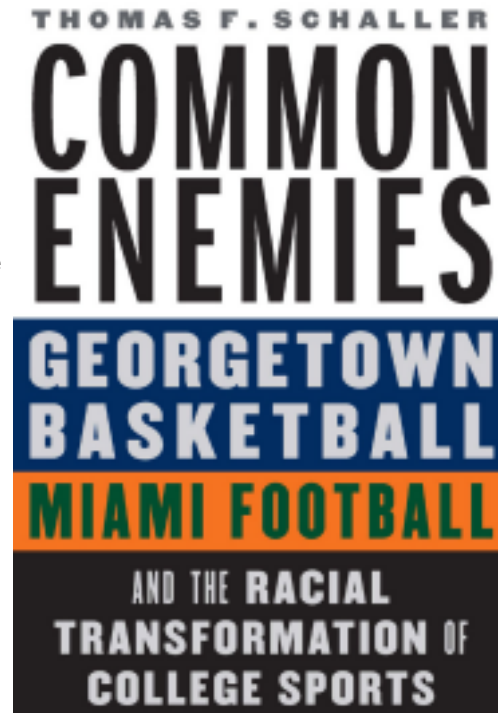
“Sports continue to be an important backdrop in the fight for equality. . . . What Schaller’s book tackles so well are the cultural barriers that were erected (sometimes stealthily) in the sports world, which undermined the progress of racial equality on the field. The cultural barriers that the Miami and Georgetown programs broke weren’t always obvious in the moment, but with the clear eye of a historian, Schaller shows the important roles these schools played in both educating white America and celebrating Black America.”—Chuck Todd, host of *Meet the Press*

During the 1980s Black athletes and other athletes of color broadened the popularity and profitability of major-college televised sports by infusing games with a “Black style” of play. At a moment ripe for a revolution in men’s college basketball and football, clashes between “good guy” white protagonists and bombastic “bad boy” Black antagonists attracted new fans and spectators. And no two teams in the 1980s welcomed the enemy’s role more than Georgetown Hoya basketball and Miami Hurricane football.

Georgetown and Miami taunted opponents. They celebrated scores and victories with in-your-face swagger. Coaches at both programs changed the tenor of postgame media appearances and the language journalists and broadcasters used to describe athletes. Athletes of color at both schools made sports apparel fashionable for younger fans, particularly young African American men. The Hoyas and the ‘Canes were a sensation because they made the bad-boy image look good. Popular culture took notice.

In the United States sports and race have always been tightly, if sometimes uncomfortably, entwined. Black athletes who dare to challenge the sporting status quo are often initially vilified but later accepted. The 1980s generation of barrier-busting college athletes took this process a step further. True to form, Georgetown’s and Miami’s aggressive style of play angered many fans and commentators. But in time their style was not only accepted but imitated by others, both Black and white. Love them or hate them, there was simply no way you could deny the Hoyas and the Hurricanes.

Thomas F. Schaller is a professor of political science at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He is a former national political columnist for the *Baltimore Sun* and is the author of *The Stronghold: How Republicans Captured Congress but Surrendered the White House* and *Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win without the South*.



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