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'Rooney Rule' called milestone for NFL

"ADVANCING THE BALL: RACE, REFORMATION AND THE QUEST FOR EQUAL COACHING OPPORTUNITY IN THE NFL"

By N. Jeremi Duru
Oxford University Press (\$24.95)

By Bob Hoover
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As head coach Mike Tomlin brings the Pittsburgh Steelers to his second Super Bowl in three years tonight, here's a refresher course on how team owner Dan Rooney helped open a path for Mr. Tomlin and other African-Americans to top jobs in the National Football League.

Although Oxford publishes highly regarded academic books, "Advancing the Ball" delivers a mass-market account of the history of the so-called Rooney Rule by a Temple University law professor.

That rule, promoted by Mr. Rooney, was devised in late 2002 to prod NFL owners to widen their search for new coaches by including African-Americans in their prospective candidate list. At that point, the NFL coaching ranks were predominately white, a long-standing practice.

N. Jeremi Duru provides a straightforward account of the campaign started by attorneys Johnny Cochran of Old Simpson fame, and lesser-known Cyrus Mehri, an Iranian-American.

The two were successful in convincing the NFL to adopt their proposal that teams must offer minority coaching prospects interviews. Mr. Rooney's efforts proved crucial to the teams' unanimous acceptance.

According to Mr. Duru, coach Tomlin won the Steelers job over more experienced white candidates on the strength of that interview.

He also reminds us that the Rooney Rule didn't emerge overnight; the Black Coaches Visitation Program endorsed by former Commissioner Pete Rozelle exposed African-American coaches at black colleges to NFL pre-season camps and Bill Walsh, one-time San Francisco 49er coach sponsored an internship program for black coaching prospects.

The Rooney Rule is the latest of the football league's efforts to diversify the management of its teams whose rosters are filled with black players.

Mr. Duru's illustration of this progress is the 2007 Super Bowl with head coaches Lovie Smith of the Chicago Bears and Tony Dungy, a former Steeler, leading the Baltimore Colts.

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best-sellers

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. **"The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest,"** Stieg Larsson, Knopf, \$27.95.

2. **"The Help,"** Kathryn Stockett, Ebury/Putnam, \$24.95.

3. **"Freedom,"** Jonathan Franzen, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$28.

4. **"Room,"** Emma Donoghue, Little Brown, \$24.99.

5. **"Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk,"** Seabury Fiskomer, Little Brown, \$22.99.

6. **"Tick Tock,"** Patterson/Ledwidge, Little Brown, \$27.99.

7. **"An Object of Beauty,"** Steve Martin, Grand Central, \$26.99.

8. **"The Sentry,"** Robert Galois, Putnam, \$26.95.

9. **"Clara and Mr. Tully,"** Susan Vreeland, Random House, \$26.

10. **"The Confession,"** John Grisham, Doubleday, \$26.95.

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. **"Unbroken,"** Laura Hillenbrand, Random House, \$27.

2. **"Cleopatra,"** Stacy Schiff, Little, Brown, \$29.99.

3. **"Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,"** Amy Chua, Penguin Press, \$25.95.

4. **"Autobiography of Mark Twain,"** Mark Twain, University of California Press, \$34.95.

5. **"Life,"** Keith Richards, Little Brown, \$29.95.

6. **"The 4-Hour Body,"** Tim Ferriss, Crown, \$27.

7. **"The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,"** Rebecca Skloot, Crown, \$25.

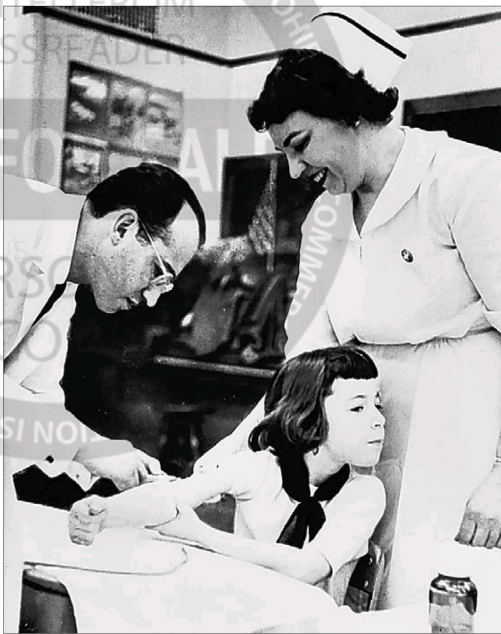
8. **"The Hidden Reality,"** Brian Greene, Knopf, \$29.95.

9. **"Twelve Steps to a Compasionate Life,"** Karen Armstrong, Knopf, \$22.95.

10. **"The Investment Answer,"** Murray/Goldie, Business Plus, \$18.

— Indie Bestsellers

Books



Dr. Jonas Salk gives the polio vaccine to a child as part of the Pittsburgh field trials in 1954.

GOOD STITCHES

From scare tactics to straight reporting, 2 endorse vaccinations

By Vivian Nereim
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Scientists understand now better than ever how vaccination works and how to make it safe. Still, whispers among parents spread quickly: Do vaccines cause autism? Epilepsy? Is there mercury in them? A live virus?

A recent study in Pediatrics reported that 25 percent of parents believe vaccines can cause developmental disorders in children, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Seth Mnookin writes in "The Panic Virus,"

It is an angry, hurtful topic to broach. Both sides have devastating anecdotes about sick children and families forever changed. Who can challenge that?

So in many ways, it is brave of Mr. Mnookin, a magazine journalist, and Paul A. Offit, an infectious disease specialist, to tackle the issue, as they do in their new books.

One could easily founder in the ocean of research, conjecture and anecdote that surrounds the vaccine controversy, surfacing years to a madman or worse.

To read either book is to receive an education. Both summarize the extensive research done on the issue. Both chronicle the growth of a market behind anti-vaccine advocates: personal injury lawyers and people selling cures for autism make money off vulnerable families, a practice

"THE PANIC VIRUS: A TRUE STORY OF MEDICINE, SCIENCE AND FEAR"
By Seth Mnookin.
Simon & Schuster (\$26.99)



Seth Mnookin

"DEADLY CHOICES: HOW THE ANTI-VACCINE MOVEMENT THREATENS US ALL"
By Paul A. Offit.
Basic Books (\$27.50)



Paul A. Offit

Dr. Offit calls "the cottage industry of false hope." And both outline what Mnookin calls the "vaccine paradox" about vaccines:

"The more effective they are, the less necessary they seem," he writes.

But Dr. Offit's book is, as the title suggests, a polemic, often written in the style of a thriller.

"The Panic Virus" is a lively story about bad science, reactive policy and shoddy journalism, told by a curious narrator.

While "Deadly Choices" will please a more limited audience — likely people who already agree with Dr. Offit — "The Panic Virus" has the potential to entertain and enlighten many.

Dr. Offit goes to great lengths to describe in his book the horrors inflicted by diseases that are now prevented by vaccinations. He also demonstrates how little research that anti-vaccine programs had on vaccination rates, linking low points, such as a 1956 episode when 120,000 children were infected with an incorrectly manufactured vaccine devised by Dr. Jonas Salk that contained live polio virus.

Two hundred were paralyzed and 31 died. But he clearly believes in one truth, plain and moral:

book is a more expansive work than Dr. Offit's.

"The Panic Virus" dips into Aristotelian philosophy and explores conspiracy theories. In one chapter, a broad discussion of scientific progress, Mr. Mnookin writes about Newtonian mechanics and Einstein's theory of relativity, yet manages to weave in a footnote about true love.

One of the most telling differences between the books is the way he includes a fuller spectrum of parental views, presenting them with nuance. He acknowledges, unlike Dr. Offit, that parenting is about good decisions, not rational evaluation. He is respectful of and sympathetic to parents who believe their child's autism was caused by vaccines, even as he dismantles their evidence.

Mr. Mnookin also outlines basic scientific knowledge that Dr. Offit perhaps wrongly assumes of his readers, explaining principles such as nature vs. nurture, correlation and causation amid the impossibility of disproving a negative.

Finally, he provides a much deeper history of vaccines than Dr. Offit, reaching back to eighth-century India and Puritan New England, where a slave of Cotton Mather described being inoculated as a child in Africa.

Mr. Mnookin eventually makes an argument and plea. Unfortunately, the first half of his book is stronger than the second. He ends with a provocative chapter titled "Casualties of a war built on lies," a phrase that sounds more like Dr. Offit's than his own.

Still, his argument is more complex than that title lets on; he outlines a messy problem, one with no easy answers.

Both books are worth reading, but to read "The Panic Virus" after "Deadly Choices" is to discover the larger story.

For a related story that ran Jan. 23 on how the medical community and some patients are starting to push back against the anti-vaccine movement, go to www.post-gazette.com.

Vivian Nereim: nereim@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1413.

Before the 'big bang'

Penn State scientist scores breakthrough about cosmos

By Fred Bortz

Move over, Stephen Hawking: Make way for Penn State University physics professor Martin Bojowald.

His new book describes what may turn out to be a definitive breakthrough toward solving the greatest problem in modern physics. Though no one expects the professor to oust the charismatic Mr. Hawking, "Once Before Time" is a more worthy successor to Mr. Hawking's 1988 mega-seller, "A Brief History of Time," than is his new one, "The Grand Design."

"ONCE BEFORE TIME: A WHOLE STORY OF THE UNIVERSE"
By Martin Bojowald.
Knopf (\$27.95)

Mr. Bojowald's story begins in 2000 when he was a 27-year-old researcher in cosmology at Penn State. Understanding the behavior of the universe as a whole requires a solid grasp of two successful but incompatible theories: general relativity and quantum mechanics.

General relativity describes gravity as the result of the warping of space and time due to the distribution of mass-energy within it.

Quantum mechanics describes how waves and particles become two faces of the same phenomenon, described mathematically as a wave function.

The two theories are incompatible. General relativity assumes that space and time can take on any value along a continuum, while quantum mechanics gets its name because properties of mass and energy only take on discrete values — states described by a set of quantum numbers.

Unfortunately, these apparently mismatched theories must both apply in this important phenomenon — the Big Bang "singularity," in which our universe of matter, energy, space and time emerged from a timeless, infinitely dense state, and a similar singularity that exists in the heart of a black hole.

Since all entities in the universe appear to be quantized, the resolution to this incompatibility seems to lie in finding a way to quantify general relativity. That is what Mr. Bojowald was trying to do when he ignored a piece of conventional wisdom, and in what he describes as a fortunate accident, emerged with a mathematical description with surprising consequences.

That approach has come to be called "loop quantum cosmology." The name is a result of its connection to loop quantum gravity, a theoretical alternative to what is known collectively as string theory.

That's where Mr. Hawking's new book comes in. Like him, Mr. Bojowald manages to describe these complicated ideas without bogging down in mathematical details. And like Mr. Hawking, he manages to help readers over the difficult spots with entertaining analogies and literature prose.

But unlike the British scientist, he shows a way to turn the spacetime continuum into a fabric knitted together from discrete loops, making it possible to avoid the singularity.

This leads to what he calls "The astonishing result... unfathomably, the wave function of the universe, winds its way before and behind the big bang, without even taking notice of the potential singularity."

The astonishment arises because the theory makes it possible to speak of, and even discover, some properties of a predecessor universe.

It removes a philosophical sticking point that many physicists have had with existing theories. No longer do they have to say that there was no such thing as time or space before the Big Bang.

His discovery, when fully developed, has the potential to be "the ultimate theory explaining not only the temporal course of the universe but also the fact that there is only a single universe."

He closes with humility about his own theory and science in general. Science's great strength is its ability to describe the practical "what" and "how" and leave the grand "why" to philosophy.

"Despite the almost intoxicating progress in science," he writes, "one must always keep in mind its limitations, which become especially clear at its frontiers."

Monroeville resident Fred Bortz is a physicist and author of the 30th-anniversary history "Physics: Decade by Decade" and 10 other books for young readers.

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