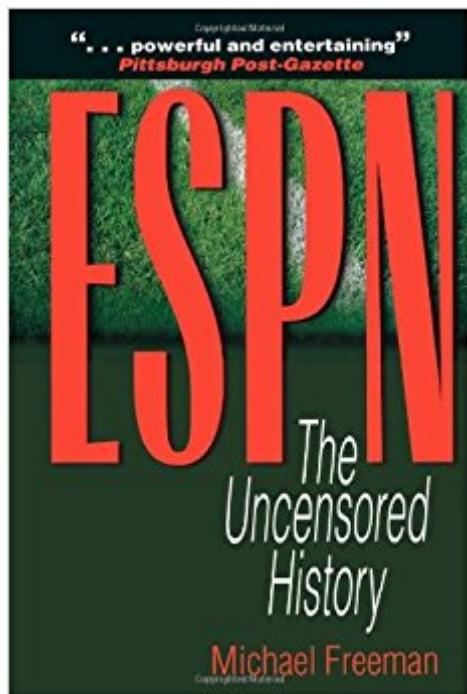


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# ESPN: The Uncensored History



## **Synopsis**

ESPN: The Uncensored History traces the first 24-hour sports network from its inception through its evolution into a slick media outlet reaching more than 60 million homes via more than 26,000 cable providers. Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, ESPN, has blazed a stunning path of achievement with its expansive coverage of broadcast sports—spinning off into ESPN2, ESPN Classic Sports, ESPN News, and ESPN Magazine—but has also experienced its share of controversy. Along the way, this American entrepreneurial triumph has alienated on-air talent, drawn charges of racial discrimination, and seen employees accused of blatant sexual harassment. ESPN's success story is no fairy tale. Among the colorful lore and amusing anecdotes lurk serious complications and controversies. Through information gleaned from internal documents, police and court records, and interviews with network employees, on-air talent, producers, and executives, ESPN: The Uncensored History probes the inside story of America's premiere sports network. Part corporate history, part media and cultural analysis, and part exposé, the book examines both the positive developments effected by the network and the bad habits it has picked up from the business it covers. This paperback reveals the most recent developments at ESPN since the publication of the hardback, including the network's aggressive reactions to the book.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

New York Times sportswriter Freeman has delivered exactly what the title promises: an uncensored history of a media phenomenon of the cable TV era, ESPN. When ESPN was formed 20 years ago,

television sports reporting was limited to snippets on local newscasts. ESPN changed that and, in so doing, also changed the way sports was covered, society's viewing habits, and sports itself. Freeman traces the history of the all-sports network from its inception as the brainchild of Bill Rasmussen to its status today as a part of the Disney media group, reaching over 60 million homes. This is really less a sports book than a warts-and-all examination of a media giant. Despite the obstacles placed in Freeman's path, the whole story is here--the struggles between management and its on-air personalities, the anchors' conflicts with one another, and the sexual harassment complaints, racial discrimination allegations, and employee drug and gambling problems that have long plagued the network. Freeman uses network documents, court records, and (often anonymous) interviews with past and current employees to make this a compelling read. Highly recommended for all libraries.-William Scheeren, Hempfield Area H.S. Lib., Greensburg, PA  
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This is a must-read for ESPN and sports fans alike. (Gadflyonline.Com)The tale of ESPN's rise digs deeply...into behind-the-scenes shenanigans... (Sports Illustrated)...powerful and entertaining. (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)Extensively researched, ESPN: The Uncensored History presents a fascinating, candid, revealing story in clear, unambiguous, and highly evocative language. A singularly memorable and compelling 'tell-all' book, ESPN: The Uncensored History is strongly recommended reading for all sports buffs. (Library Bookwatch)Network stoolies are buzzing about a...book on ESPN by New York Times sports writer Mike Freeman...sounds real juicy (New York Daily News)...a fascinating new book...might make you watch ESPN in a whole new way. (Book Page)Michael Freeman tells the story with the same urgency and breathlessness that ESPN brings to its coverage of sports.... a dazzling American success story .... (American Way)Freeman uses network documents, court records, and (often anonymous) interviews with past and current employees to make this a compelling read. Highly recommended. (Library Journal)After reading this explosive book it's hard to believe that a network owned by the squeaky-clean Disney Corporation could allow the sexual hijinks that go on at ESPN to escape their corporate scrutiny. A devastating read. (Publishers Weekly)Michael Freeman provides the first book of critical analysis of the original and largest sports network. (Sports Collectors Digest)Give Freeman points for diligent research [and] for his no-nonsense history of how the all-sports network evolved. (Philadelphia Daily News)... compelling subject matter for any sports fan. (Daytona News-Journal)Freeman, a skilled and concise writer, does an exceptional job of telling the entire storyÃ¢â€šâ€¢warts and all .... (Baltimore Sun)... sizzling expose ... truly shocking. (Publishers Weekly)This story would make a terrific

Outside the Lines. Yet ESPN's investigative series ... wouldn't touch the material ... with a 10-foot TelePrompTer. (Orlando Sentinel) Michael Freeman has captured the essence of the freewheeling, 24-hour cable network that pioneered not just sports television, but the cable industry itself. (Fort Worth Star-Telegram) ... give[s] the reader a real insight to the early days at ESPN. (Tampa Tribune) ... stunning ... fascinating .... (Chicago Sun-Times)

I have been an ESPN fan since the mid 90s, so this book was of particular interest to me. I loved learning about the man (Bill Rasmussen) who first envisioned a sports network that aired programming within Connecticut about Connecticut sports, but later expanded it to nationwide programming. The perseverance and sometimes deceit required to get the network started were as remarkable as the investment from the Getty family that finally made it happen (and subsequently resulted in Rasmussen losing control of his dream). This book goes into great detail about the mistreatment of the production assistants, and particularly the sexual harassment of the female production assistants. This problem seems to have been an issue born from the fraternity-like boys club that ESPN was in the beginning, and plagued the company for years as it grew into the national sports network it is today. We learn about the stories of some of the ESPN anchors who were there in the beginning; Chris Berman, Keith Olbermann, and Dan Patrick mostly, with Olbermann's story getting the most detail. I always wondered why Olbermann left ESPN when he did, and now I know. There was one comment made in the book that bugs me. Someone needs to tell Michael Freeman that if a woman sets the all-time scoring record for NCAA Women's Basketball and then that record is in question because of possible scoring errors, that absolutely does warrant mention on a national network.

Somewhat entertaining book by giving the history of ESPN. The book didn't try to slam the network. There certainly is plenty of ammo to do so if someone wanted to. The network with a agenda the force on millions day and night. Instead it just gives some insight as to how the ESPN got its start. I did grow tired of the description of Mike Tirico. He kept calling him the Michael Jordan of ESPN because he makes those around him better. That is what ESPN management thought. What put down on Jordan. Those two shouldn't be compared unless you are talking egos. I have never noticed that of Mike from this side. I hear a man in love with his own voice. Who hasn't learned less can be more. Especially for golf. It was also disturbing to read. That Mike Tirico never owned up to his sexual harassment activities. So one might think he still does it to this day because he didn't do anything wrong in his eyes. Anyway that some of what is in there. Again not a book based on

slamming espn.

Very good book from a history perspective, providing ample information about the many factors that collided at the right place and time to allow the formation of ESPN. Almost too much information, in some respects. Once ESPN gets underway, though, the history aspect takes a backseat to the various (well-supported) allegations made against ESPN, largely misogyny and sexism. Though important in their own right, and in the context of ESPN's history, perhaps they were featured more prominently than they deserved in this book. Also, significant criticism was leveled by Keith Olbermann, the talented former anchor. While admittedly he provided numerous good quotes and strong counterarguments to ESPN policies and practices, he may have been featured too prominently in the book as well. It also is somewhat suspect featuring him so prominently, when he has such an obvious ax to grind with the organization, as well as a somewhat checkered past himself. All in all though, a very entertaining and informative read, especially for those of us with a strong interest in ESPN. After this, you probably won't ever look at the Worldwide Leader the same again (but at least you'll understand how they're capable of putting out godawful crap like "Who's Now").

When Keith Olbermann is the most well-behaved employee, you might have a problem. And did ESPN ever have problems in the 1980s and 1990s. This book goes into the sordid details of lurid parties, awful sexual harassment and a power structure at the network that didn't care...and apparently still doesn't care because Mike Terico is still on the air. If you're looking for a case study on awful organizational culture, poor management techniques, improper HR procedures, and how much that will cost a company in the long run, this is your book. If you're looking for a fun, light read, this isn't your book because so many of the incidents are disgusting and revolting. That said, it is well written and well reported. And if you're an MBA student, it's worth the read. Hint: don't follow the ESPN model.

Title should be ESPN. The Uncensored Ancient History

I did find it got a bit boring in the middle and it started to drift along. That said I did find it interesting to see how it was started, how soon the original founders were kicked out and also the extent to which there was a sexist culture

Highly recommended for sports fans and those interested in contemporary American culture. Good stuff. This one is well worth the time. Michael Freeman has done a very nice job of writing the definitive history of one of the most important forces in American culture; ESPN. There are many fascinating tidbits of info that were news to me and the author also handles the corporate intrigue and sexual harassment stories with both depth and compassion. A terrific book that is highly recommended by this reviewer!

Definitely worth a read if you're a fan of the network. The birth of ESPN was truly amazing and if you don't know the story it's worth learning about

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