

The Dream Job

\$PORT\$

Publicity,
Promotion
and Marketing



Melvin Helitzer

The Dream Job
\$SPORT\$

**Publicity
Promotion
and Marketing**

Second Edition

Melvin Helitzer

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THE DREAM JOB: \$PORT\$ PUBLICITY, PROMOTION AND MARKETING

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Dedication

Most fans have always been for the minority in sports. They're for the guy who wins.

But this book is dedicated to all the other guys — the runners-up and the losers — who still have teams to field, stadiums to fill and salaries to pay.

And, most of all, to SID — the keeper of the faith.

Sports is a team effort. Today, even competitors in single player events require collaborators. This book is the work of a great team: made up of hundreds of advisors who read and criticized versions of this manuscript and without whose generous help this book could have been finished in half the time. They include professionals in sports information and promotion, athletes, educators, publishers, authors, agents, sports writers, editors and, a group that was especially valuable, 29 of my sports administration graduate students who field tested this manuscript over a two-year period.

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**THE DREAM JOB:
\$PORT\$ PUBLICITY, PROMOTION AND MARKETING**

This is the first text ever published on sports publicity and marketing. It is intended for an increasingly wider range of current and future sports management professionals: public relations executives in pro and collegiate sports, promotion managers with companies that distribute sports equipment, agents, attorneys and marketing managers of pro athletes and university students majoring in sports administration.

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There are two reasons for professional sports. The first is it makes money. And the second is it makes money.

That pro sports is primarily a major profit (and loss) industry has not been news for 15 years. Players first rate themselves on their salary average. Then, their scoring average. Franchises have become blockbuster capital gains investments. And sports broadcasting rights can make or break networks.

Two of the most dynamic growth industries of the past 25 years have been computer science and sports administration. From a standing start, they are now both multi-billion-dollar giants.

No one can doubt their impact. Today, American in-

For those administrators hoping to enter the field, the answer to the question, "Why do you want a job in sports?" is never "Because I love sports." The right answer is "I know the sports business and I know how to make money at it." The dash for cash makes a lot of cents.

This is the best of times for sports. It is already the 22nd largest industry in the U.S. It ranks ahead of autos, lumber and air transportation. By 1995 total sports revenue had exceeded the \$100 billion mark. Those figures may be fly droppings compared with the next 20 years.

For glory and cash. A major sports team—college or professional—must be as successful at the bank as they are at the stadium. This has been a mind-boggling development. For over 150 years sports were hobbies. They promoted exercise, fun and, in athletic competition, amateur purity. But in the past 50 years, sports have turned from lily white to professional green. That's not the green on a playing field. Athletes no longer run for their health. They run for the green because that's their life.

The American sports world is now dominated by professionals: professional athletes, professional organizations, and professional marketing. In college sports, even decisions on whom to play against and on what day and even what time to play

01

The Dash for Cash:

The Business End of Sports

dustry is programmed by computers and American leisure time is programmed by sports.

The Greening of the American Dream

In a field where insignias are traditional, the most universal sports logo today is \$—the dollar sign. That is why the name of the game is not "sports", it's "\$port\$"—with \$ signs from beginning to end.

are more often based upon financial considerations than tradition or school prestige. In the college sports industry, the only college amateurs are those on the playing field—and even that may change. One day, college athletes—like Olympians—may redefine the word *amateur*.

Fan-tastics

Show time. Sports is a pleasurable, legal drug for a materialistic culture. It is an insatiable addictive and brisk public euphoriant for an increasingly tight and emotional society. As a result, it is a highly profitable bonanza for owners, administrators and, in the pro ranks, for participants, too.

All this sportsmania has transformed fans (the word fan is short for fanatic) into sports addicts—millions of 'em who brag about the number of bowl games they watched last weekend. A truck driver, on his Miami honeymoon during the Christmas to New Year's bowl-a-mania, said to his bride, "It's such a beautiful day out, I think I'll take the TV out on the balcony." Erma Bombeck claims she was the first to recommend that any husband who watches 168 football games on TV should be declared legally dead.

Fans watch live action, replays, highlights, pregame hype and even player drafts. A recent survey indicated that fans know they are being overcharged for sports events, but record TV ratings prove not many care.

Divorce settlements often list prime-location season tickets as part of the estate's assets. Said Actress Dyan Cannon, "Stan and I agreed to share the

tickets so we still meet at every Laker game. I think that's very adult."

Sweet smell of excess.

Some sports nuts have their own shrines filled with memorabilia from game tickets and team souvenirs to photographs and trophies. How do they get that way?

First, they played or imagined they played some sport in their youth and still dream they can hit a grand slam. The dream never fades. Even when they're a pro and sitting on the bench. Babe Laufenberg, number 3 quarterback on the Dallas Cowboys, said, "Hey, I'm just two heartbeats away from the starting job!"

The stereotype of the sports addict is a 6-pack, blue-collar, athletic supporter (which is where the name "jock" came from!). Watching sports is a refuge from all the problems of daily life. When your team wins, it's a legal, quick fix. It's important. The mind of the armchair quarterback is infected by an incurable malady called hypeitis, a condition that results from digesting too much unadulterated fluff.

"Caring about sports is, let's face it, silly," wrote Dave Barry. Suppose you had a friend who, for no apparent reason, suddenly becomes obsessed with Amtrak. He babbles about Amtrak constantly, citing obscure railroad statistics from 1978; he puts Amtrak bumper stickers on his car; and when something bad happens to Amtrak, your friend becomes depressed for weeks. You'd think he was crazy, right? You'd say to him, "Bob, you're a moron. Amtrak has NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU."

But if Bob is behaving exactly the same deranged way about, say, the Pittsburgh Penguins, it's considered normal guy behavior. He could

name his child Pittsburgh Penguin Johnson and be considered only mildly eccentric.

So I don't know about the rest of you guys, but I'm thinking it's time I got some perspective in my life. First thing after the Super Bowl, I'm going to start paying more attention to the things that should matter to me, like my work, my friends, and above all my family, especially my little boy, Philadelphia Phillies Barry.

In addition, sports worship requires a sense of irreverence and humor because the games preach questionable moral values. In baseball, for example, there is sufficient evidence of theft (stealing the opposing catcher's signals), duplicity (faking out the runner), physical intimidation (the brushback pitch), disrespect for authority (arguing with the umpire), unethical behavior (stealing bases), sneakiness, threats, insults and encouraging mob hysteria. Players constantly physically touch themselves in public, yet they are the first to call the umpires blind. Fans are encouraged to be obsessed with minutiae (stats) and idolatry, to play hooky from work, and to eat gluttonous portions of junk food. If the home team loses, a majority of customers leave the premises dissatisfied with the final product without any hope of a refund or return privileges.

Like each \$1 lottery ticket, sports is a dream promising paradise. The book *Take Time for Paradise* by the late Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale and major league baseball commissioner, explained that "for the sport's participant, it is an experience of the constant

dialectic of restraint and release, the repeated interplay of energy and order, of improvisation and obligation, of strategy and tactic, all neatness denied and ambiguity affirmed by the incredible power of the random. The spectator invests his surrogate out there with all his carefree hopes, his aspirations for freedom, his yearning for transmutation of business into leisure, effort into grace, replicating in the arena humankind's highest aspirations."

For God and country. For years, sports success was rated by the Olympic spirit. "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game," wrote Grantland Rice. Rice is long gone and so are his heroics. Today, the focus is money. The objective is money. And success is measured by money. Now it's not whether you win or lose, but how the game pays you. And for those athletes, coaches and teams whose skill and luck bring favorable results, the monetary rewards start in the thousands of dollars and spiral up stratospherically to the mil-

lions of dollars.

A big trophy is only a material reflection of a big paycheck. Win or lose, athletes get paid—this year. To a fan, however, to be second is irrelevant. The only name fans remember is the winner's, unless you're a big bettor. Chico Marx was a race horse addict. One day Groucho yelled, "Hey, Chico, who won the Kentucky Derby five years ago?" "I don't know who won," answered Chico, "but I know who came in sixth. And I still have the parimutuel tickets."

Let us entertain you. The entertaining of America is a multi-billion-dollar business, and sports—both college and pro—are another facet of entertainment. Therefore, it is important to detail at great length the way hundreds of sports—from high school to college to the pros—have been affected by the greening of the American dream.

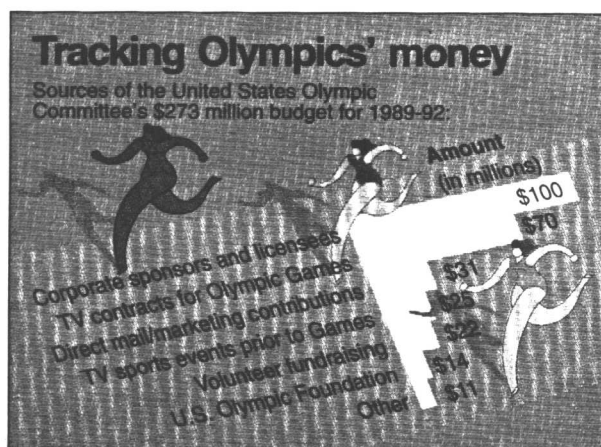
The only difficult part is keeping current. As sports marches to the beat of big money, the tempo gets faster and faster. Trying to maintain

a fix on rapidly changing sports \$tatistic\$ is like trying to change tires on a racing car. Like stock market quotations they change every second. The value of some team or player today is a figure that can be outdated before the newspaper ink is dry.

It's what's up front that counts. For generations, sports success was measured by two quotes: "In sports, there are only two places—first place and no place," and Coach Red Sanders' pregame remark to his players, "Winning isn't everything—it's the only thing" (a quote erroneously attributed to Vince Lombardi).

Today, those lines, as glittery and lightweight as tinsel, might be inspiring at halftime in a high school locker room. But not in any pro team or college board room. Now the adage is:

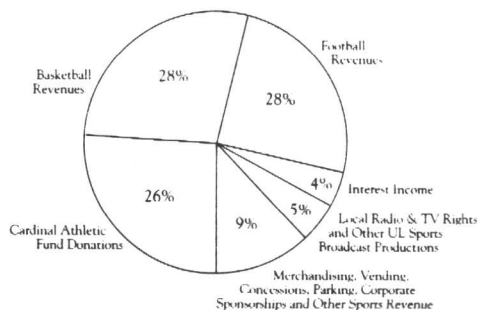
To succeed in pro sports, you need two winning teams: one on the field and one in the front office—and the most consistent must be the one in the front office.



Source: U.S. Olympic Committee

By Bob Laird, USA TODAY

Athletic Department Revenues



Where the money comes from: \$port\$ is spelled with dollar signs.

Shock-proof. In the business of sports, the goal is first profit. Winning a championship is nice, too, but only because it helps management make that profit. Without emphasis on winners over losers, a coach is out of a job. But without emphasis on profit over loss, a team is out of business. In every league there can be only one winner, but there are seven or more other teams who must still make a profit. Therefore, the most important jolt from these million-dollar sports eruptions is that front office personnel who negotiate, administer and promote these mind-boggling sums must be as skilled in their speciality as individual athletes must be in theirs. And they are more universally knowledgeable about the sport, because it is the on-looker—not the athlete—who sees most of the game.

The pen is mightier than the lord. Only precisely trained sports specialists who are perpetually creative can make the varsity management team. And this book details what these sports publicity, promotion, and marketing professionals must know.

In recent years the business of sports has changed dramatically to accommodate:

1. the attainment of bargaining power by athletes,
2. modern market methods to promote events,
3. the growth of dozens of minor competitive sports to million-dollar enterprises,
4. the shift of communication from print to broadcast,
5. the decrease in purely amateur competition,
6. ethnic diversity,
7. international professional sports.

No Time for Recreation

This book is concerned with professional promotional techniques used by mass spectator sports. Only because of space limitations does it eliminate important recreational sports such as fishing, camping, boating, jogging, and hunting. Nor does it detail such extreme sports as bungee jumping, mountain biking, daredevil skiing, climbing, snowboarding, whitewater rodeo or sky surfing. Admittedly, they are all in the sports business—walking is America's most popular recreational sport, followed by swimming—and many have competitive events that require a professional staff.

One world. We can no longer be concerned with only American sports. The future may not necessarily be one world politically, but eventually it will be one world in business and one world in sports. International peace may come faster if we all owned each other's business and played together. While the world is in turmoil and indecision, international sports competitions are popular because they have a regimented start, disciplined order and conclusive end.

Foreign relations. Each year the gulf between U.S. pro sports and international pro leagues is shrinking as the money grows larger. While current USA pro sports are adding foreign franchises, American athletes and coaches can now make almost as much money playing professionally for football teams in Canada and Europe; for basketball teams throughout the world; for baseball teams in Japan and Central America; as jockies at foreign racetracks; and even

for winning titles as sumo wrestlers in Japan.

News of considerable import. In return, foreign players comprise a solid proportion of American rosters for NHL, soccer, and jai-alai. America's most famous motor race could really be promoted as the Internationalapolis 500. Of the 33 drivers in a recent Indy 500, 18 of them represented countries other than the U.S. In addition, every car (but three) had a chassis and an engine built in England. There are numerous MLB players from Central America and a few big leaguers from Japan and Australia. In 1995, the USA baseball team in the Pan-American games lost all six of their games to such powerhouses as Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Netherlands Antilles and Brazil.

The Dash For Cash

To put the \$tatistical overload into some perspective, consider that the combined annual salary (in thousands) for each big wheel in our government: President (\$200), Vice-President (\$160), Cabinet members (\$189), each Senator and House representative (\$125), and all nine Supreme Court Justices (\$161), is just under \$40 million. Yet the amount paid to these top 700 officials of our country is less than one-third the combined annual income of just one superstar in each of seven pro sports: Mike Tyson (boxing), Barry Bonds, (MLB), Michael Jordon (NBA), Wayne Gretzky (NHL), Troy Aikman (NFL), Greg Norman (golf) and Andre Agassi (tennis).

The source of all this sports elixir that changes base metal into gold comes from four

main mines:

1. **corporate advertisers** (mainly broadcast),
2. **season tickets and luxury boxes,**
3. **licensed merchandise royalties, and**
4. **stadium concession sales.**

1. Corporate advertisers

More than \$10 billion is spent annually by advertisers on all TV sports programming (including high school games), and the four networks and cable are increasing the time they devote to sports by big gulps each year. The NFL's new international venture wouldn't even consider starting without an ABC-TV contract which provided \$30 million for over two years.

Corporate advertisers are also providing millions if the name of the stadium carries their name.

2. Season tickets and luxury boxes

The first luxury boxes (often called skyboxes) were built in the Houston Astrodome in 1965. Now no stadium is complete without them, since they are one of a team's major sources of income—approximately 21% of ticket sales.

Moving van teams. Without doubt, luxury boxes are a main reason for building and renovating sports stadiums and for relocating franchises. When the L.A. Raiders moved back to Oakland they made no secret that the aging L.A. Coliseum's inability to renovate and build 175 luxury suites was an insurmountable problem. Green Bay gave up its agreement to play in the Milwaukee County Stadium because skyboxes were not available.

The lunching pad. Today, no

sports stadium is built without the addition of skyboxes. They average about 65 per stadium and they rent for \$50,000 to \$200,000 each. Their amenities include leather seats and luxury lounges, TV monitors, valet parking, and private elevators. Child-care facilities are also available and so is concession roomservice.

Season tickets must now be purchased months in advance. The funds are put into an account in which interest is paid to the ticket holder for funds on deposit until opening day. That, too, will change.

Personal seat licenses are one-time contracts, ranging in price from \$600 to \$5,400, that entitle the holder (they can be bought and sold like stock) a perennial option to purchase quality season tickets. Any team that sells all its permanent seat licenses can raise more than \$100 million. More of these

revenue ideas are needed—and SID is expected to develop them—if the sports boom is to continue.

3. Team-licensed merchandise royalties

For years, "Sports merchandising seemed to be a license to print money," claimed John Helyar of *The Wall Street Journal*. "Manufacturers slapped team logos on everything from caps to cologne, and retailers opened their doors wide to let in all the fans who believe they get a prestige rub-off or rub-down by purchasing sports licensed products."

The biggest selling products include playing equipment, clothing, food, toys, games and beverages. For example, nearly a billion is spent on sports drinks (Gatorade, Exceed and Quikick) even though research proves they are no more effective than water.

It is a \$13 billion business. MLB merchandise sales provide each team with about \$4 million in profits, based upon an even split of the league's \$2.8 billion in merchandising net revenue. Even minor league sales exceed \$40 million. NHL merchandise annually has topped \$1 billion.

Strike proof. During the strike years of 1994-95, sales hit the wall. Fans felt alienated and changed their buying habits. Suddenly team logos on their clothes reminded them that they were being used, not admired. The stock of companies that specialized in sport megastore retailing fell by 50%. But soon after the strike ended, and sports returned to the normal flow, the sales figures perked right up.

It's a crime. Mass-auto-graphed sports merchandise is

FUN 'N' GAMES with COCHRAN!



"... So the evil owner moved his team to a kingdom where he was promised luxury skyboxes and an attractive long-term lease."