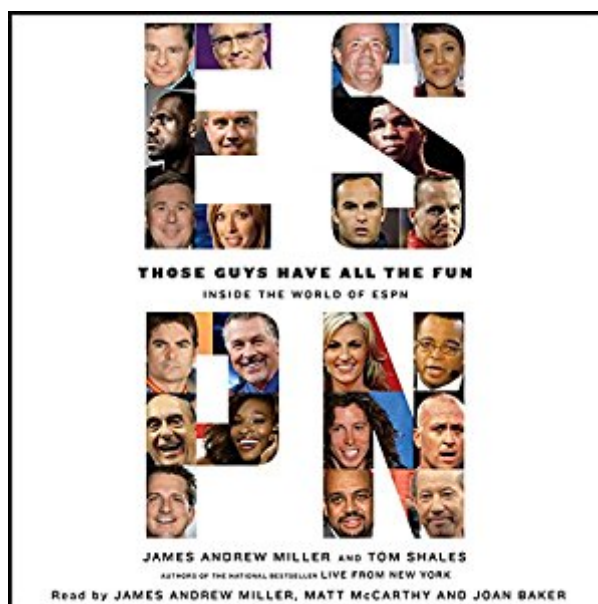


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# Those Guys Have All The Fun: Inside The World Of ESPN



## Synopsis

ESPN began as an outrageous gamble with a lineup that included Australian Rules Football, rodeo, and a rinky-dinky clip show called Sports Center. Today the empire stretches far beyond television into radio, magazines, mobile phones, restaurants, video games, and more, while ESPN's personalities have become global superstars to rival the sports icons they cover. Chris Berman, Robin Roberts, Keith Olbermann, Hannah Storm, Bill Simmons, Tony Kornheiser, Stuart Scott, Erin Andrews, Mike Ditka, Bob Knight, and scores of others speak openly about the games, shows, scandals, gambling addictions, bitter rivalries, and sudden suspensions that make up the network's soaring and stormy history. The result is a wild, smart, effervescent story of triumph, genius, ego, and the rise of an empire unlike any television had ever seen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

James Andrew Miller's--its obvious from the Introduction to the Acknowledgments to the writing itself that the sports-indifferent Tom Shales main contribution was lending his name to the project--THOSE GUYS HAVE ALL THE FUN is an engaging, if overly long, look at what has made ESPN the media and cultural phenomena that it is. Using an oral history format, the narrative runs from ESPN's humble beginnings to its current status of world domination. According to Miller, there were nine steps in ESPN's history that fell perfectly for the company not only to survive, but to rise to the top of its field.1) Original founders Bill and Scott Rasmussen's decision to buy a transponder on RCA SATCOM I in 1978.2) Getty Oil's investment of \$15 million in May of 1979.3) Creating a dual revenue stream in March 1983.4) Coverage of the America's Cup Challenge in 1987.5) Getting

TV rights to NFL games in 1987.6) The \$400 million, 4-year MLB deal in 1989.7) The mid-90s generated "THIS IS SPORTSCENTER" advertising campaign.8) The acquisition of a full season of NFL games in 1998.9) The documentary series SPORTSCENTURY. The main players behind the scenes receive as much attention as the talent on screen. The Rasmussens have the idea, and negotiate an incredibly unlikely start, but are almost immediately kicked out the door by Stu Evey, the moneyman from Getty, and Chet Simmons, the legendary NBC producer. By the mid-1980s, Evey and Simmons were replaced by Bill Grimes and Steve Bornstein. By the 2000s, the respected and congenial George Bodenheimer was teamed with talented, but utterly brash Mark Shapiro. What didn't change, however, was Bristol, the little Connecticut village that is as much a character as any.

I just finished the book yesterday and I must say 748 pages later I was completely disappointed in the end product. I was originally inspired to read the book based on the hype by some of the pundits calling it extremely controversial, etc etc etc. In particular Dan Patrick was the biggest culprit. When he was promoting the book he made you think the majority of the book would be about the rivalries and backstabbing that went on. I should have known better when I received the book and saw how ridiculously thick it was. To make a long story short it is more of a historical time line of the network rather than an inside peak at the personalities. I'm a huge sports fan so that was what kept me reading. Nothing really "bombshellish" was dropped except for the fact that in the early days Mike Tirico was a pervert and by today's sexual harassment standards he'd be in the unemployment line for life. That was the only revelation that really surprised me. Aside from that, the same arrogance and over inflated egos that are on display regularly on ESPN continually resonate throughout the book. At the end of the day I let a good marketing and PR campaign bamboozle me into buying this paper weight. You can't really say it's well written because there is no writing. The "authors" (and I use that term loosely) just took quotes from various people about time line based happenings at ESPN, slapped a collage on it and called it a book. Not that I am a stickler for this sort of thing but I found a TON of grammatical errors that I would assume would have been found prior to print seeing as how the authors did nothing more than collect quotes and interject a few lines of back story on every other page. The only reason it gets a 2 star versus a one star is because it was sports related.

Tom Shales and James Andrew Miller wrote one of my favorite TV books ever, *Live From New York: An Uncensored History of Saturday Night Live, as Told By Its Stars, Writers and Guests*. That book, a huge compilation of interviews with dozens of people tied to SNL did a great job of detailing

the creation, development, constant reinvention, and gossip behind one of our most beloved (and at times, reviled) shows. Unfortunately, Shales and Miller's technique falls flat when it comes to the history of ESPN. The problem is that ESPN doesn't really provide its own established narrative for the reader (and Shales and Miller, I would imagine) to fall back on. While ESPN certainly has aired several memorable sporting events, to most viewers, the events themselves are of importance, not the personalities and stories behind them. While the behind the scenes gossip from some of ESPN's most well known personalities, such as Dan Patrick and Keith Olbermann are interesting, and often fun, the book often feels more like rehashing of contract negotiations and business dealings than a trip through ESPN history. Once the book gets past building the foundations of the network and its early days (which are truly the best part of the book), it seems like an endless stream of narratives about not much tied together by even less. The book is begging for a narrative that the interviews presented do not really provide. Most puzzling is that a book about a sports network provides so few anecdotes about specific moments in sports or from sports personalities. Perhaps this is because, while ESPN has covered its fair share of sports news, it seldom has carried the biggest events.

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