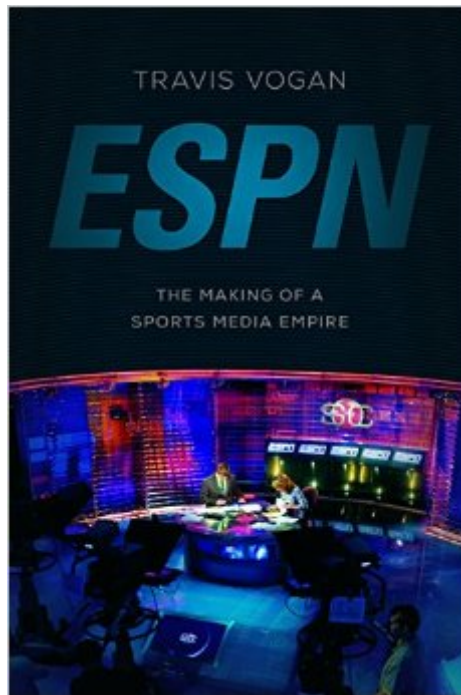


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# ESPN: The Making Of A Sports Media Empire



## Synopsis

Once a shoestring operation built on plywood sets and Australian rules football, ESPN has evolved into a media colossus. A genius for cross-promotion and its near-mystical rapport with its viewers empower the network to set agendas and create superstars, to curate sports history even as it mainstreams the latest cultural trends. Travis Vogan teams archival research and interviews with an all-star cast to pen the definitive account of how ESPN turned X's and O's into billions of \$\$\$.

Vogan's institutional and cultural history focuses on the network since 1998, the year it launched a high-motor effort to craft its brand and grow audiences across media platforms. As he shows, innovative properties like SportsCentury, ESPN The Magazine, and 30 for 30 built the network's cultural caché. This credibility, in turn, propelled ESPN's transformation into an entity that lapped its run-of-the-mill competitors and helped fulfill its self-proclaimed status as the "Worldwide Leader in Sports." Ambitious and long overdue, *ESPN: The Making of a Sports Media Empire* offers an inside look at how the network changed an industry and reshaped the very way we live as sports fans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At first you might be forgiven for thinking that this book is a little too specialised, targeting a niche of a niche as it were, yet strangely the tale of the creation and expansion of an American sports television channel is rather fascinating, managing to serve several audiences at the same time. Unless you are particularly interested in sports programming or the broadcast television industry, ESPN might not mean so much to you; especially the further you are away from the United

States. Yet this company has grown and probably exceeded the wildest dreams of its founders and there is a good chance that you could have seen some ESPN output and didn't know it. If you are focussed on the broadcast industry you have one great story, if you are more interested in business start-ups and development here is another. If you are a generalist there's a good story to tell, and the professional or academic can take other things out of this for their own particular needs. Dependent on your interest, you may skip a few pages here and there, yet overall you still are given an interesting, credible and powerful read. Whilst the trials and tribulations of the early days are satisfactorily covered, the book particularly focuses on the post-1998 activities of the company as it branched out to become a multi-country, multi-platform and multi-output behemoth. Some attempts at diversification failed; yet you can still learn from the mistakes of others. Rather a lot has worked though! Some of the anecdotes placed in the book really made it shine, even if it was not the intention.

I'm far from a sports fanatic, but on the other hand, I've got a long history of mostly non hands-on participation that dates back to the 1950s, when I loved to watch the Gillette-sponsored Friday night boxing matches with my dad - on our black-and-white TV set (complete with rabbit ears, no less). Later, I was a die-hard viewer of ABC's "Wide world of Sports" that launched in 1961, and I waited impatiently for the every-four-year coverage of my beloved Olympic games. My heart was in my throat as my hero, Jean-Claude Killy, schussed his way to wins in all three Alpine events in the 1968 Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France. And who could forget late sportscaster Jim McKay's emotional, "They're all gone" as he reported on the Munich massacre at the 1972 Summer Olympics? Except for the Olympics, which now come at us every two years (and with far less impressive TV coverage, IMHO), those other programs have long since come and gone. But on Sept. 7, 1979, another sports phenomenon emerged: ESPN (the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network). It hit the ground running, and - although I learned from this book that it didn't turn a profit until 1985 - it's pretty safe to say it's become a household acronym. In 2014, as the author points out, ESPN was named the "world's most valuable media property." Today, I'd bet the farm that not a day goes by that my husband and I - separately or together - tune in to some kind of ESPN show. Virtually every weeknight, you'll find our set tuned to one of my favorite shows, "Pardon the Interruption," to watch the sparring between hosts Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon. So it was that when I was granted the opportunity to read and review this by the publisher (via NetGalley), I jumped at the chance.

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