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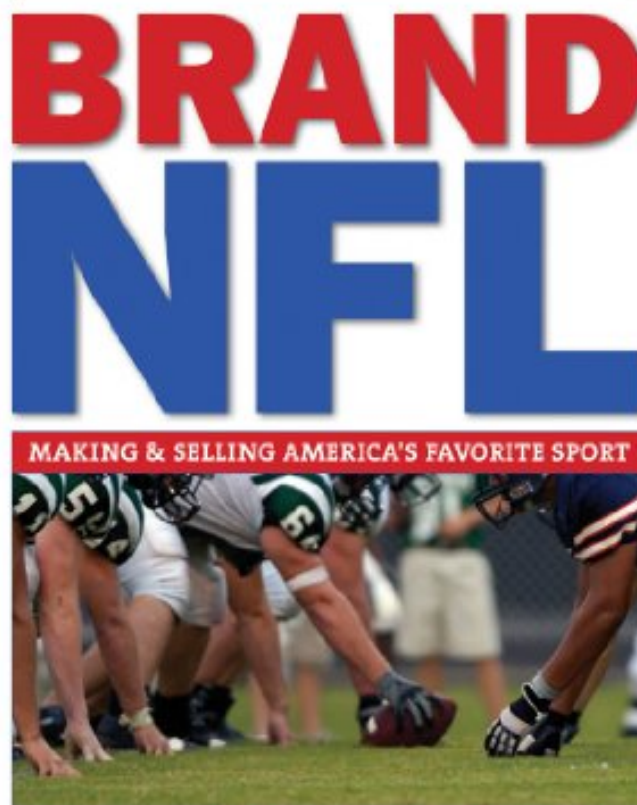
Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport

Michael Oriard

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"Oriard, a former pro player and current professor, makes the epic tale of the NFL's touchdown drive from tainted image to powerhouse brand as intensely exciting as a Sunday game on a highlight reel."

—ROBERT LIPSYTE, contributing writer, *The New York Times*



MICHAEL ORIARD

With a new afterword from the author

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Michael Oriard : Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Much More than a Game, It's Big Business By Frank Bellizzi Over the last half century, the Super Bowl has gone from being a televised championship game to being the centerpiece of an unofficial national holiday in the United States, a day when Americans eat more than on any other day besides Thanksgiving. In "Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport," historian Michael Oriard tells about the National Football League's players, coaches, commissioners, and team owners, the people who have been a

part of that remarkable transition. Considering what playing professional football once was—a job that men worked at not as long as they could, but as long as they had to—the reader understands that the NFL's great triumph was not inevitable. Most of all, however, Oriard describes and attempts to understand the incredible new profitability of the NFL. He seems most interested in the sums of money that, as he puts it, "overwhelm comprehension" and the ways in which all those billions of dollars may have changed the game (5). Given his topic, it comes as no surprise that Oriard's sources include major newspapers published in cities with an NFL franchise, such as the "New York Times" and the "San Francisco Examiner," and magazines like "Sports Illustrated" and "Esquire". But because he is interested in how mountains of money have impacted professional football, Oriard has also consulted periodicals like "Forbes," "Financial World," and "Street Smith's Sports-Business Journal." In addition to these sources, he sometimes cites his own personal experiences as a standout college football player who went on to play a few seasons in the NFL, and who has followed the on- and off-field drama of the game ever since he hung up his cleats. For me, Oriard's observations based on his experience were some of the most interesting and convincing parts of the book. For example, on page 55, he describes the early 1970s, when the Super Bowl "was still just a championship game with a huge television audience" but was far from what it has since become. With that, he adds this footnote: "As a Chief, I was entitled to buy two tickets to the game but did it only once, when a former teammate from Notre Dame called to ask if I could get him seats. The idea that I should buy my allotment every year, because they would be worth a fortune to someone somewhere, never crossed my mind." How could anyone do a better job of pointing out the difference between then and now? Oriard does more than report a mountain of information about the modern NFL. He uses the facts in order to piece together big puzzles that render impressive portraits, maps of the past that are certainly interesting, and maybe even instructive. For example, Oriard relates the stories of the labor tension and players' strikes of the 1970s and 80s in a way that underscores how these were all part of the same great struggle that lasted from 1974 all the way to 1993. He also tells the tales of two great NFL commissioners, Pete Rozelle and Paul Tagliabue. Oriard suggests that although significantly different from one another, each one was the right man at the right time, and that the lengthy tenures of Rozelle and Tagliabue marked distinct periods of solid growth for the NFL. Highlights in this book for me included a section that relates the unlikely story of the origins and rise of NFL Films. Father and son Ed and Steve Sabol both loved football and movies. It turns out that, starting with next to nothing, they made some of the best football films ever. Oriard brings out how Steve understood both art and film making, and how he incorporated that knowledge into the crafting of NFL Films. The point here is that these films, which began to be produced in the 1960s, generated a tremendous amount of publicity for professional football. How I remember those films when they were first shown on TV, and how I later spent hours in my back yard trying in vain to dive in slow motion. I also appreciated how, in chapter 6, "Football in Black and White," Oriard presses the point that because the genetic makeup of individuals is so very mixed and diverse, the social construct we call "race" is nowhere close to being a pure biological category. More than once he also points out that the supposedly natural superiority of the black athlete can be and is an insidious distinction. Why? Because the same distinction that sees the black person as more likely to be a physically superior athlete has also been used to suggest that that same person is more likely to be intellectually inferior. Overall, I learned a lot from and often enjoyed reading this book. There were times when the sheer volume of facts and figures was a bit too much for my taste. But no one can accuse Michael Oriard of being sloppy. He likely has as good a handle on the details of professional football as anyone. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting!! Great for Marketing Class! By Sports Student I bought this book for a sport marketing class. The information in the book is very thorough!! I would recommend this book to anyone in a sport marketing program!! 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Ok, not great By John Roethel First half of book relates the growing pains of the NFL during the Rozelle era. Interesting stories about labor negotiations and marketing decisions. Compares and contrasts Rozelle's marketing emphasis with Tagliabue's resolution of the free agent problem and other labor matters. Second half of book tilts toward the racial changes that occurred in the '90s and '00s in the NFL. Switch of subject matter caught me by surprise. I found the first half more enlightening.

Professional football today is an \$8 billion sports entertainment industry--and the most popular spectator sport in America, with designs on expansion across the globe. In this astute field-level view of the National Football League since 1960, Michael Oriard looks closely at the development of the sport and at the image of the NFL and its unique place in American life. New to the paperback edition is Oriard's analysis of the offseason labor negotiations and their potential effects on the future of the sport, and his account of how the NFL is dealing with the latest research on concussions and head injuries.