



America's Game: The Epic Story of How Pro Football Captured a Nation

Michael MacCambridge

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It's difficult to imagine today—when the Super Bowl has virtually become a national holiday and the National Football League is the country's dominant sports entity—but pro football was once a ramshackle afterthought on the margins of the American sports landscape. Yet in the span of a single generation in postwar America, the game charted an extraordinary rise in popularity, becoming a smartly managed, keenly marketed sports entertainment colossus whose action is ideally suited to television and whose sensibilities perfectly fit the modern age. Pro football's ascent is an epic American story, and *America's Game* does it full justice.

Beginning with the World War II years, when the NFL was fighting for its very existence, Michael MacCambridge traces the game's grand transformation, with particular attention paid to six key franchises—the Rams, Browns, Colts, Cowboys, Chiefs, and Raiders—and how their fortunes reflected the larger growth of the game itself. Along the way we meet the sport's legendary architects, men such as Pete Rozelle, George “Papa Bear” Halas, Bert Bell, Tex Schramm, and Lamar Hunt, as well as a wide range of its memorable characters—including Johnny Unitas, Paul Brown, Vince Lombardi, Jim Brown, Al Davis, Joe Namath, Bill Walsh, and Deion Sanders. In the process we witness the rivalries, the games themselves, and the passion that have made professional football the nation's signature sport.

MacCambridge continues the story through the turbulent 1980s and 1990s, when labor disputes and off-field scandals shook the game to its core, and up to the sport's present-day preeminence under Paul Tagliabue. The unique portrait of the modern game's inner workings and relentless competitiveness sheds light on contemporary stars such as Ray Lewis and Peyton Manning, as well as on the men whose leadership skills are scrutinized and second-guessed by much of the country, celebrated coaches such as Bill Parcells, Dick Vermeil, Tony Dungy, and Brian Billick.

Magisterial and sweeping, definitive and unprecedented in scope, *America's Game* is cultural history at its finest. A thoroughly entertaining account of the entire universe of professional football, from locker room to boardroom, from playing field to press box, it is a unique lens through which to view the past sixty years of American history.

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