



# Play-by-Play: Radio, Television, and Big-Time College Sport

*Ronald A. Smith*

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The phenomenal popularity of college athletics owes as much to media coverage of games as it does to drum-beating alumni and frantic undergraduates. Play-by-play broadcasts of big college games began in the 1920s via radio, a medium that left much to the listener's imagination and stoked interest in college football. After World War II, the rise of television brought with it network-NCAA deals that reeked of money and fostered bitter jealousies between have and have-not institutions. In *Play-by-Play: Radio, Television, and Big-Time College Sport* noted author and sports insider Ronald A. Smith examines the troubled relationship between higher education and the broadcasting industry, the effects of TV revenue on college athletics (notably football), and the odds of achieving meaningful reform.

Beginning with the early days of radio, Smith describes the first bowl game broadcasts, the media image of Notre Dame and coach Knute Rockne, and the threat broadcasting seemed to pose to college football attendance. He explores the beginnings of television, the growth of networks, the NCAA decision to control football telecasts, the place of advertising, the role of TV announcers, and the threat of NCAA "Robin Hoods" and the College Football Association to NCAA television control. Taking readers behind the scenes, he explains the culture of the college athletic department and reveals the many ways in which broadcasting dollars make friends in the right places. *Play-by-Play* is an eye-opening look at the political infighting invariably produced by the deadly combination of university administrators, athletic czars, and huge revenue.

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