



On Any Given Sunday: A Life of Bert Bell

Robert Lyons

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Bert Bell, a native of Philadelphia, has been called the most powerful executive figure in the history of professional football. He was responsible for helping to transform the game from a circus sideshow into what has become the most popular spectator sport in America. In *On Any Given Sunday*, the first biography of this important sports figure, historian Robert Lyons recounts the remarkable story of how de Benneville “Bert” Bell rejected the gentility of a high society lifestyle in favor of the tougher gridiron, and rose to become the founder of the Philadelphia Eagles and Commissioner of the National Football League.

Bell, who arguably saved the league from bankruptcy by conceiving the idea for the annual player draft, later made the historic decision to introduce “sudden death” overtime—a move that propelled professional football into the national consciousness. He coined the phrase “on any given sunday” and negotiated the league’s first national TV contract. Lyons also describes in fascinating detail Bell’s relationships with leading figures ranging from such Philadelphia icons as Walter Annenberg and John B. Kelly to national celebrities and U.S. Presidents. He also provides insight into Bell’s colorful personal life—including his hell-raising early years and his secret marriage to Frances Upton, a golden name in show business.

On Any Given Sunday is being published on the 50th anniversary of Bell’s death.

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