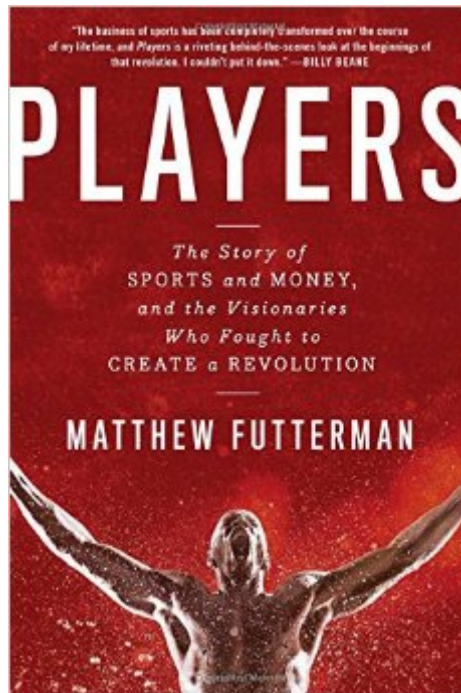


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# Players: The Story Of Sports And Money, And The Visionaries Who Fought To Create A Revolution



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • "The business of sports has been completely transformed over the course of my lifetime, and *Players* is a riveting behind-the-scenes look at the beginnings of that revolution. I couldn't put it down." • "Billy Beane The astonishing untold story of the people who transformed sports, in the span of a single generation, from a job that required top athletes to work in the off-season to make ends meet into a massive global business. In the cash-soaked world of contemporary sports, where every season brings news of higher salaries, endorsement deals, and television contracts, it is mind-boggling to remember that as recently as the 1970s elite athletes earned so little money that many were forced to work second jobs in the off-season. Roger Staubach, for example, made only \$25,000 in his first season as the starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys and wound up selling commercial real estate during the summer. Today, when *Fortune* reports that every athlete on its Top 50 list makes more than twenty million dollars per year, it's clear that a complete reversal of power has occurred right before our eyes. *Players* is the first book to tell the astonishing narrative behind the creation of the modern sports business—a true revolution that moved athletes from the bottom of the financial pyramid to the top. It started in 1960, when a young Cleveland lawyer named Mark McCormack convinced a young golfer named Arnold Palmer to sign with him. McCormack simply believed that the best athletes had more commercial value than they realized—and he was right. Before long, he raised Palmer's annual off-the-course income from \$5,000 to \$500,000 and forever changed the landscape of the sports world. In *Players*, veteran *Wall Street Journal* sports reporter Matthew Futterman introduces a wide-ranging cast of characters to tell the story of the athletes, agents, TV executives, and league officials who together created the dominating and multifaceted sports industry we know today. Beginning with Palmer and McCormack's historic partnership, *Players* features details of the landmark moments of sports that have never been revealed before, including how legendary *Wide World of Sports* producer Boone Arledge realized that the way to win viewers was to blend sports and human drama; the 1973 Wimbledon boycott, when eighty-one of the top tennis players in the world protested the suspension of Nikola Pilic; and baseball pitcher Catfish Hunter's battle to become MLB's first free agent. *Players* is a gripping, fly-on-the-wall account of the creation and rise of the modern sports world and the people who fought to make it happen. From the professionalization of the Olympics to the outsize influence of companies like IMG, Nike, and ESPN, this fascinating book details the wild evolution of sports into the extravaganza we experience today, and the inevitable trade-offs those changes have wrought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In my living memory, whenever I have thought "professional athlete," I have thought "gazillionaire." OK, maybe just millionaire. The money in professional sports today is simply outrageous. Have you ever seen a picture of Tom Brady's house? But that has not always been the case. In *Players: The Story of Sports and Money, and the Visionaries Who Fought to Create a Revolution*, Matthew Futterman tells the story, or rather stories, of how we got here. (I guess I shouldn't say we. I'm just a fan with no money, not a gazillionaire athlete.) In the not-so-distant past, professional athletes were either nonexistent or were very poorly paid. An occasional superstar or media darling might get some endorsements or command a higher salary due to his fame, but it wasn't until a lawyer named Mark McCormack signed up Arnold Palmer as the first client of his fledgling company International Management Group (IMG) that the keys to the treasure chests began to be found. With IMG's sponsorship and promotional assistance, Palmer went from being one of the world's best golfers to being a very rich golfer. McCormack changed the game and his company still represents some of the world's best (and richest) athletes. McCormack also pioneered the televising of events like Wimbledon. He converted this little tennis event, viewed by a few elite tennis aficionados, into a major television event, viewed by millions. As a result of the increased exposure, the popularity of tennis soared, as did the prize money for players. Futterman describes the rise of free agency in sports, starting with Catfish Hunter. As free agents, players "could prove to everyone in baseball--and every team-sport athlete on the planet--the value of the open market.

A special thank you to Simon & Schuster and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest

review. Bold impressive cover! Matthew Futterman, a senior special writer for sports with the Wall Street Journal; who better to tell readers of this incredible journey-PLAYERS, The Story of Sports and Money, and the Visionaries Who Fought to Create a Revolution a well-researched, gripping and insightful look at "big business" American professional sports industry. From the fifties to the essential shift in the 1960s, with the first eight decades of the twentieth centuryâ "a profession largely one of exploitationâ "to its driving force today. How we arrived. Timely, and newsworthy, a story of sports, history, revenues, power, money, greedâ "those courageous individuals who helped make the rise of modern sports, and its transformation to today. A wide-ranging cast of characters, from athletes, agents, TV executives, and league officials who together created the dominating and multifaceted sports industry. Futterman delves into the history as far back as Mark McCormack with his simple ideas. "Sports stars were about athletes." They needed gasoline to make them go. People wanted to connect with them. They were a salable commodity that was being undervalued, and by doing so, the industry was preventing these athletes and the sports from being as good as they could be. They were being held back in so many areas. McCormack wasnâ™t about just higher salaries for athletes. He wanted to uncover ways to enrich the clients he represented. His philosophy was about creating an environment where television networks could give fans the convenience of watching competitions, from all over the world, in the comfort of their homes.

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