

## ***Changing the Game: My Career in Collegiate Sports Marketing***

By Jim Host (with Eric A. Moyen). Published 2020 by The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, USA. 296 pp. ISBN: 0813179556

*Reviewed by Zack P. Pedersen, Indiana University Bloomington, USA*

Jim Host's memoir—written with the assistance of Eric A. Moyen, an associate professor and department head of educational leadership at Mississippi State University—is an acute contemporary historical account of early sport sponsorship and marketing by a foundational figure in those segments of the sport industry. A well-written and engaging autobiographical account from the first to the last chapter as Host and Moyen describe in detail some of the key issues, challenges, developments, and circumstances that have led to the current landscape of collegiate print, radio, and television sponsorship. There are various aspects of Host's life and career that are unique in comparison to many sport communication and sport management students, such as his experiences as a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athlete at the University of Kentucky (not coincidentally, the book is published by his alma mater's university press), his entrepreneurial ventures, and his time spent in Kentucky politics. However, rooted in every chapter and engrained in every life decision recounted in this memoir are substantive principles that could be posited as being essential for aspiring sport marketers and those looking to pursue careers in other aspects (management, communication, etc.) of the sport industry. The autobiography reveals how, throughout his life, Host displayed steadfast character and stuck to his principles, which only became more difficult as he took the sponsorship business he created and brought it into the public sphere. While students who read the book will learn about many lessons that will help them in both sport and life, they will no doubt see in the pages of this memoir that the most glaring exemplary characteristic is Host's hard work. Though Host clearly states the issue that this work ethic has had on his personal life, he sets an example for what many sport marketing, communication, and management students will have to do to break into the various segments of the sport industry.

Host and Moyen start this book by highlighting Host's family dynamics growing up, along with a couple of the key events that shaped his morals moving forward. Host worked hard and considered himself fortunate enough to receive an athletic scholarship and—after an interesting string of events—play baseball at the University of Kentucky. During his time as an NCAA athlete in the late 1950s, Host's entrepreneurial prowess and networking ability were evident in various circumstances during his collegiate career. Also during this time, while some of his actions, as detailed in the autobiography, may come across as controversial (e.g., selling University of Kentucky basketball players' extra family-sanctioned tickets and splitting the profit), his decisions during this time are presented more as

pure survival for a poor athlete under the NCAA's rules and regulations. When Host's time at the University of Kentucky ended, he was uncertain about his future career as he had minimal leads. However, because of his networking skills, he had a few people that would vouch for him, which was enough to get him started in the unfamiliar field of politics.

The next stage in Host's life revolves around his maneuvering within the political landscape in the state of Kentucky. This section of his life, while interesting to read about in Chapters 4 and 5, and essential for his growth into a sport professional, is not as relevant to aspiring sport management and sport communication professionals as the rest of the chapters. Throughout the two chapters covering his political career, there are snippets of the key decisions that he made regarding his radio communication and future sponsorship company. However, these decisions and lessons would lend themselves useful to more business- and entrepreneurial-centric people.

The chapters that follow Host's transition from political office to his company's business office will be of most interest to aspiring sport professionals. Almost every facet of the sport industry is covered in some regard in the heart of this book. Host's impact includes creating the original "sponsorship package" that is used even today by entities like the media and sponsorship giant Learfield IMG College. But his impact is way beyond that original creation. Host, through sticking to his agreement with the then-leader of the NCAA (Walter Byers) about committing his life to college sports, had his hand in almost every aspect of the collegiate landscape during his years as a business professional. Host created state broadcasting rights and agreements that brought each university he worked with tremendous popularity and success. Such activities led to the ability to create a national radio broadcasting system for the NCAA March Madness tournament, an essential step for the NCAA tournament becoming the billion-dollar sponsorship and media powerhouse that it is today. Host's success thereafter in terms of creating print media guides for tournaments led to the purchasing of a printing press for his company, as to streamline the process to make sure everything was always delivered on time. After this success, individual universities wanted his company, Host Communications Incorporated, to revitalize their sponsorship and marketing efforts, for which, as clearly presented in this memoir, Host seemed to never fail in bringing in instant success. Throughout the years of working with various sports information directors, athletic directors, and conference commissioners, Host transformed into somewhat of a one-person search committee, making calls that ended up placing coaches at prominent universities.

Host and Moyon detail the good deals and the friendships that sprouted from Host's relationships with various people in a plethora of different positions. The book also reveals the less-than-pleasant interactions that seemed to plague the later part of his career. Dealing with big-time coaches and taking his company public called for a great deal of business savvy, support, and determination. His network and strong principles always seemed to prevail though, as he fought through a merger partner trying to bankrupt his company, rival businesses attempting to undermine his relationships, and even "Papa" John Schnatter failing to follow through on a \$5 million pledge for the KFC Yum! Center.

In conclusion, this book is an excellent resource for anybody venturing into the areas of sponsorship activation, communication, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, or sales. Host, an individual who could be considered a modern-day