



## Book review

# The Business of Sport Management

**Editors** John Beech & Simon Chadwick  
**Publisher** Pearson Education  
**Price** £32.99  
**Reviewer** Peter Miller

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Eureka! A long overdue sports management publication which covers a wide range of issues and resists filling its pages with case studies from American sports that have little or no bearing outside the US.

The academics contributing to this book also convey the impression that they don't take themselves too seriously; at times the delivery reveals a genuine sense of humour – most refreshing.

The *Business of Sport Management* takes the reader on an enjoyable journey through the evolution of sport, from the early days of amateurism to professionalism and onwards to commercialism. While being an ideal theory tool for students, the book is also a worthwhile companion for those of us who work in the world of sport, pulling together 20 authors with diverse backgrounds.

With so many contributors, perhaps there are bound to be some contradictory lines of rationale; early reference to post-commercialism and the arguable demise of certain sports are challenged further on in with reference to new avenues of revenue opportunity. However, most importantly, the theory is continually linked to actual case studies. These range from the Olympic Games to the Swanbourne Nedlands Surf Life Saving Club in Western Australia, with insights that keep the reader riveted to the cause.

Contributors also prompt the reader to challenge comments, by asking them how they would react in

certain circumstances and this in itself is very positive.

The early chapters plot the history and structure of sport. The evolution of Rugby, for example, is clearly demonstrated in real terms instead of by using theory charts and rationale.

John Beech then moves this on skilfully to more 'sexy' issues such as his insight into lucrative individual deals where he focuses on the likes of the iconic David Beckham. However, his suggestion that football might have reached its post-commercialism period falls short of researching the avenues of revenue that are now opening up to clubs. There are, for example, lucrative overseas programmes that have yet to be exploited to the full. There is no need to push the panic button just yet, but clubs and sporting organisations would do well to heed the advice contained herein.

I have to congratulate Bill Gerrard. Anyone who can make sports finance interesting deserves credit. And where many previous publications fall short in failing to take the blackboard theory to the real world, Gerrard excels, offering the reader invaluable understanding of business behind the scenes at football clubs.

Given the breadth of expertise, perhaps *The Business of Sport Management* could have included a piece from an author with operational expertise – a football club executive. This would have extended the scope beyond Gerrard's beloved Leeds United and the Serie A Clubs.

Players' wages dominate various sections of the book, but students are not offered accurate insight into a player's salary package and how its composition affects the balance sheet of a selling / buying club. With Gerrard's access to information at Leeds' Elland Road headquarters, it might, for example, have been



useful to dissect the contract and subsequent transfer of Robbie Fowler. The player was transferred to Manchester City but he was still being paid an estimated £10,000 per week by Leeds United.

I like the sobering switch from the doom, gloom and financial tales of woe at Leeds and Fiorentina to the chapter from Cameron O'Beirne. This highlights the problems of mail order company Pro-Angler Fishing Tackle Direct, and gets the reader's feet truly back on the ground. It's what the ninety-nine percent of us outside of the heady world of the English Premiership have to deal with!

O'Beirne and Susan Stoney set out to challenge the reader to discover a viable way of cracking e-business and making the internet work for the organisation. Pro-Angler Fishing Tackle Direct, for example, has succeeded by developing a website with online purchasing, which reduces the costs of printing and distributing an angling products catalogue. Customers update their own records on the database, which allows targeted marketing and promotions, and the site offers news and information to help drive traffic. It has also become a useful tool for dealing with international suppliers.

Then, just when the subject matter might cause a lapse in enthusiasm, cue 'Sports and the law', in which Karen Bill deftly falls back on the Beckham formula. This is certainly not a swipe: the chapter is well researched and highly informative.

The book's early sweeping statements that football (soccer) clubs have peaked and face imminent meltdown are harsh and lacking analysis of international opportunities. Indeed, it could be argued that this contradicts the sections on e-business and television rights. Just because the perceived boom period is over, it is no reason to assume that the industry is now in decline.

Closer inspection of the elite English Premier League would certainly provide no comfort because the member clubs generally demonstrate a frightening lack of innovation and creativity and tend to surround themselves with Old School employees (desperately lacking and tirelessly self protecting). The student

should be warned: even armed with such an informative and knowledgeable read as this, fresh talent will find this exclusive club almost impossible to infiltrate. The key to the future of sport will be to get these dinosaurs to read *The Business of Sport Management*. And despite the excellent material in the book, gaps remain which will leave students in for a few surprises.

Having said all of this, *The Business of Sport Management* is refreshing in its approach. It will be a popular tool for students and, most importantly, an essential aid for entering the real world, where theory is only one part of the job.

The final chapter, 'The Future of Sport Business', typifies the overall approach. Author Simon Chadwick delivers an exciting, humorous and informative contribution. How often do the so-called experts and pundits delight in informing us about what has happened but fail to get off the fence and predict what is to come? Chadwick leaves the fence far behind. For example, he suggests that the use of customer databases and strategic collaboration with resource providers will become increasingly important in sport, areas which to date have been largely ignored. He also believes that sports clubs will increasingly become multi-product leisure brands.

This section really hits the spot: it recognises unique aspects of the industry and challenges us to find suitable ways of adapting information for the real world. As such, the book achieves its goal, appealing to executives and academics alike. I loved it, and advise you to make it your next purchase.

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**Peter Miller** was until recently CEO of Northampton Town FC, where he increased commercial income by 600 percent in one year. Previously Miller was CEO of FCOTT (The Football Company of Trinidad & Tobago), while also heading up marketing and promotions for the FIFA under-17 World Cup Finals (2001), bringing in \$7.8 million of sponsorship. His earlier posts include lecturer in sports management and public relations at the University of the West Indies.