

Stephen Aris, *Sportsbiz: Inside the Sports Business*, Hutchinson, London, 1990. Illus., pp. xii + 196, \$39.95.

The last two decades have witnessed an increase in the commercialisation and marketing of sport. In days of yore the affairs of various sporting organisations were generally managed and controlled by what might be called the traditional sporting administrators - persons who had had a history in the playing of the sport concerned, those who equated sport with social and community ideals, or dedicated amateurs with their sense of duty and service. In the last two decades an increasing number of sporting competitions have become dominated by entrepreneurs, who have sought, apparently with more than a degree of success, to transform sport into commercial money making propositions. In Australia, for example, the struggles between Kerry Packer and the Australian Cricket Board in the late 1970s readily spring to mind. More recently both Australian football and rugby league have developed national competitions in a bid to capture television and sponsorship dollars. There have also been the development of national leagues in soccer, basketball, baseball and (field) hockey.

Stephen Aris in *Sportsbiz* provides an examination of the commercial transformation of sport in (mainly) Britain. His major focus is on the entrepreneurs - agents, promoters, television moguls and

sponsors - who have transformed a variety of sports into multi-million/billion dollars operations. His major message is that such persons view sport as just another form of entertainment, and manipulate and manage its operation with the objects of maximising revenue and profits. Implicit in this critique is that before the advent of these new sporting entrepreneurs, sport was somewhat more noble and pure, and not tainted by commercial and monetary considerations. As Wray Vamplew ably demonstrated in his *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain, 1875-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1988) such a view lacks any historical support (see review in *Sporting Traditions*, November 1989). What is unique about sport in recent years is its ability to milk the cash cows provided by television and sponsorship.

While Aris provides some useful information concerning developments and entrepreneurial personalities in such sports as tennis, golf, motor racing, snooker, British soccer, American football and athletics his account tends to skim the surface rather than provide in depth analysis. His material is also very repetitive, being a series of separate essays (some of which he had produced elsewhere in his capacity as a journalist) rather than being an integrated whole. He has one chapter titled 'Football and Cricket' which is solely devoted to developments in British football. Surprisingly he hardly provides any examination of the impact of Kerry Packer on cricket. Packer's activities would seem to be consistent with those of the other entrepreneurs he examined. Or, could it be that Packer's impact was mainly an Australian, rather than a cricket, phenomenon?

Despite these criticisms *Spotisbiz* will be of use to those persons wishing to obtain information on the new entrepreneurs who currently dominate and determine the production of a variety of sports.

Braham Dabscheck
University of New South Wales