



There You Have It: The Life, Legacy, and Legend of Howard Cosell

John Bloom

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This is the first full-length biography of the lawyer-turned-sports journalist whose brash style and penchant for social commentary changed the way American sporting events are reported. Perhaps best known for his close relationship with the world champion boxer Muhammad Ali, Howard Cosell became a celebrity in his own right during the 1960s and 1970s—the bombastic, controversial, instantly recognizable sportscaster everyone "loved to hate."

Raised in Brooklyn in a middle-class Jewish family, Cosell carried with him a deeply ingrained sense of social justice. Yet early on he abandoned plans for a legal career to become a pioneer in sports broadcasting, first in radio and then in television. The first white TV reporter to address the former Cassius Clay by his chosen Muslim name, Cosell was also the first sportscaster to conduct locker room interviews with professional athletes, using a tape recorder purchased with his own money. At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, he not only defended the fisted "Black Power" salutes of American track medalists John Carlos and Tommie Smith, but he publicly excoriated Olympic Committee chairman Avery Brundage for "hypocritical," racist policies. He was also instrumental in launching ABC's *Monday Night Football*, a prime-time sports program that evolved into an American cultural institution.

Yet while Cosell took courageous stands on behalf of civil rights and other causes, he could be remarkably blind to the inconsistencies in his own life. In this way, John Bloom argues, he embodied contradictions that still resonate widely in American society today.

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