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John Bloom. *There You Have It: The Life, Legacy, and Legend of Howard Cosell.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. xviii + 220 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55849-837-2; $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55849-836-5.

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

Howard Cosell's voice is unforgettable–loud, forceful, and sometimes belligerent, with a nasally Brooklyn accent rarely heard on television. His vocabulary was just as remarkable. His stream of polysyllabic words differentiated him from any sports broadcaster before or since his heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. John Bloom's interesting and well-researched *There You Have It* puts the sportscaster's unusual career in the context of the social, cultural, political, and economic changes of his era. Bloom argues that no other sportscaster has had as much influence or celebrity as Cosell did when he was an ABC star. He also suggests that few white public figures took a more daring stance in support of civil rights as Cosell. *There You Have It* seeks to tell us why.

Bloom relies heavily on the broadcaster's autobiographies, *Cosell* (co-written with Mickey Herskowitz in 1973) and *Like It Is* (1974); his 1981 interview with Elli Wohlgelernter for the American Jewish Committee; and David Kindred's *Sound and Fury: Two Powerful Lives, One Fateful Friendship* (2006) about Cosell's relationship with Muhammad Ali. Bloom supplements these sources with newspaper and magazine clippings and interviews with people who knew Cosell well, including his daughter, sportswriter Frank Deford, sportscasters Frank Gifford and Keith Jackson, and ABC Sports executives Bert Sugar and Jim Spence. In addition, Bloom makes good use of the papers of ABC Sports impresario Roone Arledge and video footage from Cosell's career.

Bloom aims to describe the contradictions of Cosell's life and career. The strength of *There You Have It* is its ability to place that career in the context of television's rapid growth in popularity and the tumult of his times. Cosell "loved the limelight, and knew how to grab it. He understood that society and history and culture were not distractions from sports but were the very things that made sports, and entertainment in general, meaningful" (p. 188).

Bloom devotes a chapter to Cosell's start as a studious yet sports-loving working-class Jewish boy growing up in Brooklyn during the Depression and then enlisting in the army during World War II. The next two chapters trace Cosell's detour from his early career as a hotshot Manhattan attorney to his compulsion to become a sports broadcaster, starting with a position at a New York City radio station and ending up as a reporter and commentator for ABC. Bloom also discusses Cosell's possible role in the Red Scare blacklists of the 1950s but the evidence is inconclusive.

Although it provides glimpses into his personal life, the heart of Bloom's book focuses on Cosell's career and its significance. Bloom examines Cosell's bold embrace of civil rights during the 1960s through an award-winning documentary about the all-black Grambling University football team and his supportive comments about the protests of sprinters Tommy Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics. Most important, *There You Have It* explores his friendly coverage of boxer Cassius Clay, who later changed his name to Muhammad Ali. Bloom describes how Cosell developed a rapport with Clay, sympathized with the boxer when he joined the Black Muslims and changed his name, and then supported him when he refused to be drafted into the army during the Vietnam War. Bloom puts Cosell's relationship with Ali in the context of other Jewish entertainers and intellectuals who backed black civil rights.

Further chapters explore Cosell's contentious time as a commentator on *Monday Night Football*, when he reached his greatest fame but also became widely disliked; his coverage of the 1972 Munich Olympics; and his reporting on the massacre of Israeli athletes at the hands of Palestinian terrorists. Through Cosell's story, Bloom shows the growing role that sports played in the broadcast industry and American culture.

As Bloom explains, Cosell reached the peak of his ca-

reer just as television became the main medium for bringing sports into American homes. With just three networks dominating the airwaves, a handful of sportscasters were regularly seen and heard by anyone interested in sports. These giants of the tiny screen included Curt Gowdy, Pat Summeral, and Keith Jackson, whose clear, soothing voices could be heard announcing baseball, football, the Olympics, and just about any other game to be found on television. It is difficult to imagine, however, any of these other leading sportscasters capturing the kind of biographical attention that Bloom gives Cosell. They were background voices, subservient to the game itself, while Cosell was often more interesting than the actual games. His brash, outspoken, and colorful style made him as much of a spectacle as anything that the cameras showed happening on the field.

In today's fractured media environment, with multiple broadcast channels and a nearly infinite amount of Web content, it is unlikely that any sportscaster can command the kind of attention that Bloom describes Cosell once holding. Bob Costas, Bill Simmons, Michael Wilbon, Tony Kornhiser, Christine Brennan, and others all have distinctive styles and loyal followers. None of them, however, is as ubiquitous as Cosell, who appeared in movies and celebrity television specials as well as seemingly every sporting event broadcast by ABC.

Bloom analyzes with depth the contradictions of Cosell's career. He shows how Cosell insistently criticized the glitz and big money that attached itself to sports in the television age, at one point calling sports "the single most corrupting influence on American society" (p. 129). At the same time, he enjoyed the fame and money it gave him, participating fully in such television-manufactured spectacles as *Battle of the Network Stars* and *Saturday Night Live with Howard Cosell*. Bloom describes Cosell's desire to do serious journalism in the show that he produced toward the end of his career, *SportsBeat*, which was critically acclaimed but drew low ratings and little support from his bosses at ABC.

There You Have It is repetitive at times, emphasizing the same points in several chapters. Bloom succeeds, however, in putting the career of a remarkable sports broadcaster into the context of his interesting times.

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