



# Keepers of the Flame: NFL Films and the Rise of Sports Media

*Travis Vogan*

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## **Keepers of the Flame: NFL Films and the Rise of Sports Media** Travis Vogan

NFL Films changed the way Americans view football. *Keepers of the Flame: NFL Films and the Rise of Sports Media* traces the subsidiary's development from a small independent film production company to the marketing machine that *Sports Illustrated* named "perhaps the most effective propaganda organ in the history of corporate America." Drawing on research at the NFL Films Archive and the Pro Football Hall of Fame and interviews with media pioneer Steve Sabol and others, Travis Vogan shows how NFL Films has constructed a consistent, romanticized, and remarkably visible mythology for the National Football League. The company packages football as a visceral and dramatic sequence of violent, beautiful, graceful, and heroic gridiron battles. Historically proven formulas for presentation--such as the dramatic voiceovers once provided by John Facenda's baritone, the soaring scores of Sam Spence's rousing background music, and the epic poetry found in Steve Sabol's scripts--are still used today. From the Vincent Price-narrated *Strange but True Football Stories* to the currently running series *Hard Knocks*, NFL Films distinguishes the NFL from other sports organizations and from other media and entertainment. Vogan tells the larger story of the company's relationship with and vast influence on our culture's representations of sport, the expansion of sports television beyond live game broadcasts, and the emergence of cable television and Internet sports media. *Keepers of the Flame: NFL Films and the Rise of Sports Media* presents sports media as an integral facet of American popular culture and NFL Films as key to the transformation of professional football into the national obsession commonly known as America's Game.

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