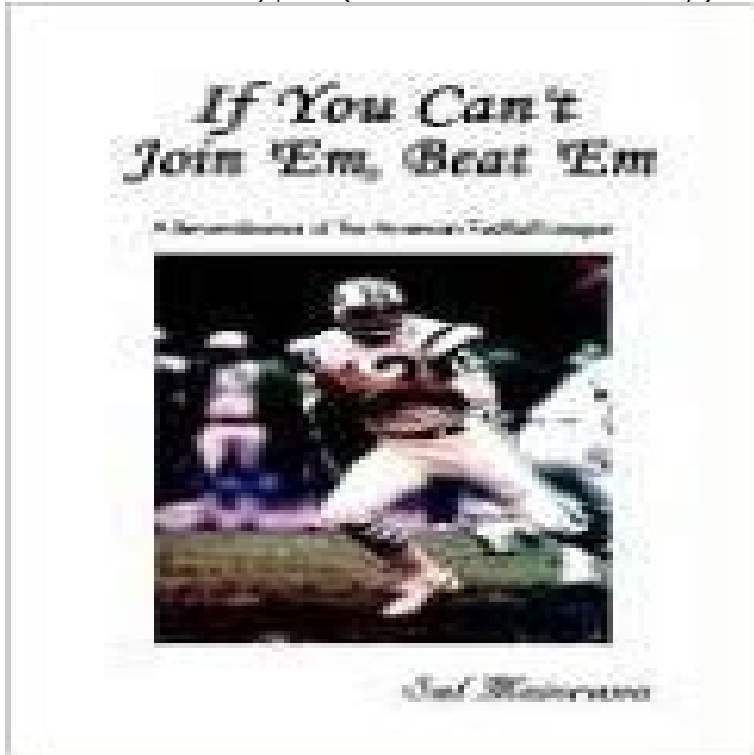


If You Cant Join Em, Beat em: A Remembrance of the American Football League (1st Books Library)



Sportscaster Curt Gowdy once said that the story of the AFL, how the league grew and became popular, is one of the best sports stories of all-time. This is that story. It was 1959 and professional football was gaining popularity faster than a Marilyn Monroe pin-up. The National Football League had reached new heights when its dramatic 1958 championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants went into overtime on national television. Looking to ride that wave of momentum was a young man from Dallas named Lamar Hunt, but when his inquiry about NFL expansion was rebuffed by NFL commissioner Bert Bell, and his subsequent attempt to purchase a struggling NFL franchise was denied, what did the son of one of the richest men in America, millionaire oil magnate H.L. Hunt, do? He decided to form his own professional football league, and when he found seven other wealthy men willing to join the risky but exciting venture, the American Football League was born. It was considered a joke by longtime Chicago Bears patriarch George Halas, and other NFL luminaries predicted a rapid demise for the AFL. Instead, the rebel league gained a strong foothold in the pro football marketplace with its entertaining style of play, and ultimately it forced the NFL - albeit grudgingly to accept the AFL as its equal. The two leagues merged in time for the 1970 season, and it wasn't long before this superpower entity created a seismic shift in this nation's sporting passions as pro football surpassed Major League Baseball as our national pastime. As part of the merger deal, it was agreed that starting with the 1966 season the champions of both leagues would meet in a world championship game which quickly became known as the Super Bowl. And after NFL powerhouse Green Bay easily won the first two of these showdowns, the Joe Namath-led New York Jets delivered to the

AFL its long-awaited respect with a shocking defeat of the mighty Colts in Super Bowl III. It was one of the defining moments in pro football history and it forever altered the course of the sport. If You Cant Join Em, Beat Em. Hunt and his cronies were told they couldnt join the NFL, so in the end, they simply beat them. In 2009 the NFL is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the birth of the AFL, and in these pages you will be afforded an opportunity to re-live some of the greatest games in AFL history including all 10 championship games. Further, you will meet a wonderful cast of characters who shepherded the AFL from the humblest of beginnings to Super Bowl glory, the likes of which includes Namath, Len Dawson, Cookie Gilchrist, Billy Cannon, Ernie Ladd, Gino Cappelletti, Billy Shaw, Jack Kemp, Paul Lowe, Ron Mix, Willie Lanier, Don Maynard, George Blanda, Abner Haynes, Lance Alworth, Daryle Lamonica, Buck Buchanan, Bobby Bell, Al Davis, Lou Saban, Weeb Ewbank, Hank Stram, Sid Gillman and John Madden. It is now known as the American Football Conference within the confines of the National Football League, but its roots in the American Football League forever remain part of sports lore.

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