



Run to Glory and Profits: The Economic Rise of the NFL during the 1950s

David George Surdam

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The National Football League has long reigned as America's favorite professional sports league. In its early days, however, it was anything but a dominant sports industry, barely surviving World War II. Its rise began after the war, and the 1950s was a pivotal decade for the league. *Run to Glory and Profits* tells the economic story of how in one decade the NFL transformed from having a modest following in the Northeast to surpassing baseball as this country's most popular sport.

To break from the margins of the sports landscape, pro football brought innovation, action, skill, and episodic suspense on "any given Sunday." These factors in turn drove attendance and rising revenues. Team owners were quick to embrace television as a new medium to put the league in front of a national audience. Based on primary documents, David George Surdam provides an economic analysis in telling the business story behind the NFL's rise to popularity. Did the league's vaunted competitive balance in the decade result from its more generous revenue sharing and its reverse-order draft? How did the league combat rival leagues, such as the All-America Football Conference and the American Football League? Although strife between owners and players developed quickly, pro-football fans stayed loyal because the product itself remained so good.



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