Bill Rasmussen

Founder of ESPN

Rasmussen founded ESPN in the summer of 1978. He had his innovative brainstorm for an all-sports cable TV network within days of his firing by the New England Whalers of the World Hockey Association on Memorial Day weekend. A former radio and television sports broadcaster, Rasmussen had been the Whalers Communications Director but when the Whalers didn't make the 1978 WHA playoffs, Rasmussen and most of the front office staff were fired.

His idea for an all-sports cable TV network captured his imagination, and he incorporated the fledgling network on July 14, 1978. He had already begun to seek out cable television companies, sponsors, investors and partners. With an idea that was truly ahead of its time, and running out of cash, Rasmussen found one investor who believed in the concept in February, 1979, and by September 7, 1979, ESPN was on the air for the first time. This was after only 14 months since Rasmussen's moment of inspiration.

A life-long entrepreneur and sports fan, Rasmussen's innovations in advertising, sports and broadcasting are numerous and include not only the creation of ESPN, but also the concept for "Sports Center," wall-to-wall coverage of NCAA regular- season and "March Madness" college basketball, and coverage of the College World Series. He broke the advertising barrier to cable television by signing Anheuser Busch to the largest cable TV advertising contract ever.

Named "The Father of Cable Sports" by USA Today, Rasmussen was named to The Sports 100, honoring the 100 most important people in American Sports History. His place in sports history was further recognized by Sports Illustrated in 1994, when he was honored as one of the "40 for the Ages," one of 40 individuals who has significantly altered and elevated the world of sport in the last half of the 20th Century. In 2016, Rasmussen was induced into the Cynopsis Sports Hall of Fame.

Rasmussen's entrepreneurial daring, his irrepressible enthusiasm and a dash of good luck gave the world the first 24-hour television network. Once unleashed upon sports fans, ESPN's impact forever changed the way we watch television.

Rasmussen is a gifted raconteur and a popular public speaker discussing American entrepreneurship, innovation, and the birth of ESPN. He is also a frequent guest on radio and television shows, including recent appearances on the nationally-syndicated radio shows *Sports Byline USA with Ron Barr* and *The Dennis Miller Show* and the cable television interview show *It's Your Call*. He was a featured guest on the FOX News Channel's *Red Eye with Greg Gutfeld*.