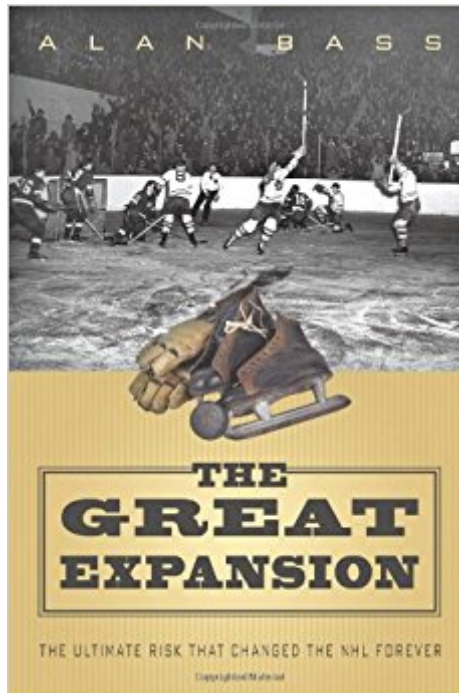


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The Great Expansion: The Ultimate Risk That Changed The NHL Forever



Synopsis

"Alan Bass does an incredible job of going through the era and describing these vital events that changed the game." -EDWARD FRASER, THE HOCKEY NEWS "To the degree that expansion has changed the league since 1967, it's surprising that no one's gone in-depth to see what faced the NHL's six newest teams. Bass does, and gives any hockey history nut their fix!" -BRYAN THIEL, HOCKEY54.COM "Alan Bass has captured the history of the biggest turning point in NHL history ... Bass brings both the highlights on the ice and all the important maneuvers behind the scenes to fans, including what happened and why. Full of in-depth analysis and interesting and never before heard stories, this book is a must for any hockey fan." -BRAD KURTZBERG, AUTHOR OF SHORTHANDED: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE SEALS "Alan Bass has produced a well researched and thoughtful look back at the NHL's original 'expansion' ... this book is a must for all those interested in the history of pro hockey in North America." -BRUCE "SCOOP" COOPER, HOCKEY HISTORIAN, AUTHOR, AND BROADCASTER

It was March 1965 when Clarence Campbell, president of the National Hockey League, emerged from a long board meeting and announced that the NHL would double in size beginning with the 1967-68 season. Fans loyal to the "Original Six" were furious. Owners were irate. In *The Great Expansion: The Ultimate Risk that Changed the NHL Forever*, hockey expert Alan Bass profiles the power brokers and provides an in-depth study of the decision and its revolutionary impact on the game. Bass, a former hockey player and freelance sports writer, relies on thorough research, interviews, and first-person accounts in order to reach into the past and uncover the mystery of a behind-closed-doors decision that seemed improbable at the time. As he profiles the powerful owners, media moguls, and die-hard sportsmen involved in the politics and backroom dealings, Bass shares a never-before-seen glimpse into how the decision forever impacted professional hockey in North America. *The Great Expansion: The Ultimate Risk that Changed the NHL Forever* is not only an important documentation of Clarence Campbell's bold move of doubling the number of NHL franchises, but also provides an unforgettable look back into the history of pro hockey in North America.

Book Information

Paperback: 248 pages

Publisher: iUniverse (January 21, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1450286054

ISBN-13: 978-1450286053

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,007,032 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Coaching > Hockey](#) #337 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Hockey](#) #751 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Winter Sports](#)

Customer Reviews

If you were to pick an event that's the obvious biggest before-and-after event in the history of the National Hockey League, the 1967 expansion probably would be it. The league went from a close-knit community that few cared about outside of six cities, to a major North American enterprise. Once the NHL went up to 12 teams, there would be little turning back on its way to its current 30 teams. It was a little surprising that a book hadn't been done on this subject yet, although trying to get a general hockey book published can be quite a chore. Freelance author Alan Bass decided to go the self-publishing route, and the result is "The Great Expansion." The book is a slightly curious mix of plenty of research and some original interviews with an odd structure and strange conclusions. The NHL started in 1917 in Canada, and had the usual growing pains over the years. Finally in 1942, we got down to the six-team era most people consider the golden age of the sport. The teams played 14 times a year, and there were less than 120 players in the major leagues at a given moment -- which meant there was a great deal of competition for roster spots. If you didn't make it to NHL, you were stuck taking bus rides from Rochester to Springfield. That's hardly fair for someone who might be the 121st best player in North America (which, realistically, applied only to Canadians with a couple of American exceptions). The NHL teams essentially ran out of ways to make money, and television was the obvious outlet. The only way to do that, though, was to get a deal in the United States, and the only way was to have teams in places other than New York, Boston, Detroit and Chicago. Bass goes through the run-up to the expansion, the terms of the deal, and the expansion draft. He even uncovers some interesting stories that had gone unsaid for years. Then he switches his attention to the six new teams, with each one getting a chapter. The teams are examined from their creation through their early history. That's followed by a few general chapters about expansion's success in the NHL and in other sports. All right, fine. But there are some good-sized problems here in a number of areas. It didn't take long for them to come out, either. I can put up with miscounting the number of Cups the Maple Leafs won during the Original Six era, or misspelling Gil Perreault's name once. However, blaming World War II on some of the folding

franchises in the 1930's seems like bad judgment; the Depression is a much more logical explanation. Later on, the author misses out on a main reason why the NHL kept expanding in the 1970's -- not only was the cost of doing business going up because of the World Hockey Association so that expansion fees helped there, but it also kept the WHA out of certain markets. And the Anaheim/Miami expansion is ignored, a case when the NHL was anxious to get two then-economic powers (including Disney) into the league. In addition, sometimes the narrative just doesn't add up. I have some first-person knowledge here about Buffalo's attempt to get into the NHL in 1967, because I interviewed Seymour and Norty Knox for a book I wrote about it. They told me that they had celebrated the night before the announcement because they were told by a league owner that they were all set to get in. Then the next day, they found out they had essentially finished eighth in a seven-team race, as St. Louis was given a franchise even though there was no bidder. Knox was told by Rangers' owner Bill Jennings that Leafs' owner Stafford Smythe had killed Buffalo's hopes. From there, Montreal voted with Toronto, Chicago voted against Buffalo because James Norris lost money on a Buffalo business deal, and Detroit followed Chicago. Buffalo isn't given much credit early in the book for being a contender in the expansion derby. Then there's a media report that does briefly reveal Toronto's role in Buffalo's demise. And in the Pittsburgh section, Art Rooney is shown making several calls on that city's behalf in order to get Pittsburgh a team over Buffalo. I'm still under the assumption that the Knox brothers' version is the one to believe -- because I heard it with my own ears -- but I'm still confused. Some of the material is a little dry, such as the round by round descriptions of the expansion draft or of the early seasons of the new teams. That's at least understandable. It's easy to appreciate the effort Bass put into "The Great Expansion," as well as the courage for publishing it himself. I found myself wishing that it had gotten one more rewrite with a few more original sources of information. But I'm rooting for Bass to come back and try again soon, because he certainly has the dedication needed to tackle future book projects.

Fun book; love the era. Written in an very entertaining manner. Strong recommendation.

THIS BOOK WAS BOUGHT AS A GIFT FOR AN AVID OLD TIME HOCKEY FAN. I'M TOLD HE REALLY LOVED IT . BOOK IS VERY INFORMATIVE WITH ALL THE FACTS OF THE EXPANSION MOVE PAST THE ORIGINAL 6 TEAMS. JUST A GREAT READ FOR ANY HOCKEY FAN WHO FOLLOWED HOCKEY BACK IN THE SIXTIES.

A serious work about NHL expansion from 6 to 12 teams has been lacking. It still is. Alan Bass's *The Great Expansion* is poorly written, deadly dull, and factually inconsistent. Start with the cover, which features a photo from a game that looks to be late 40's, early 50's vintage hockey for a book that centers on events that began in the mid-60's. The author's descriptions of hockey in the 50's and 60's are remarkably inaccurate, as if his only research were viewing youtube snippets. I began reading the book in the chapter about St. Louis, as I was quite a Blues fan back in the day. I got queasy about the book's validity when the author claimed that the St. Louis Arena was built in the late 1920's and not used since. The Arena housed minor league hockey for decades (notably Chicago's top minor league team among others), conventions, fairs and the like. It was unquestionably run down and in disrepair, but when you get something that simple wrong, it is a huge red flag. (And I won't even go into his assertion that "the NHL has always known what its doing" when it comes to the league's history of big decisions.) His selective descriptions of certain games within each of the expansion teams histories are lifeless and oddly chosen. The 67-68 year had numerous significant games, dramatic games, and in almost every instance, Bass seems to write about games that have little bearing on the historical significance of the franchise he is spotlighting. Good editing would have served the author well. Sections are needlessly repetitive. His description of the draft selections in June '67 could and should have been done in a round-by-round graph. Instead, the author stretches the selections into pages of the book that seem to be little more than filler. Perhaps the biggest disappointment is in the lost opportunity of capturing the amazing and colorful personalities of that era. There were so many larger than life figures in both management and on the ice, and Bass captures none of them as they should have been. A lesser criticism is that the author opted (apparently) to save money and not include any photographs from the time. *The Great Expansion* reads more like a well-intentioned, C+ level term paper, and is to be avoided. The definitive book about this marvelous period in hockey history has yet to be written. This book was a colossal disappointment.

Provides insightful behind the scenes look at what was required to obtain an expansion franchise and the challenges of maintaining a competitive team in the early years.

I've done an enormous amount of research on the topic of the 1967 NHL expansion (especially the June draft in Montreal), and I can definitively say that this book is so full of factual errors about the rules/procedures of the draft day and the order that the players were chosen as to be laughable. If you've unfortunately wasted money on this poorly researched mess, be assured that the events at

the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal on June 6, 1967 did not remotely transpire the way the author claims they did. Since the actual draft should have been the easiest part to research and get right, I have to disregard everything else in this otherwise boring book,

This book is more of a paper than a story. It's just an assembly of quotes from other sources and lots of words getting repeated over and over without any creativity. I suspect the author would make a good academic, but it's a poorly written novel. Waste of money.

Fascinating

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