



# Power Plays: Politics, Football, and Other Blood Sports

*John M. Barry*

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The pursuit and wielding of power may be America's most intoxicating and sometimes revolting pastime. John M. Barry, award-winning author of *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (1997), purveys American uses and abuses of might in the media, in Washington, in Olympians, and in college football.

With *Power Plays: Politics, Football, and Other Blood Sports* Barry draws together essays that examine the causes and effects of power. He shows how much politics and powerful agendas affect our lives. Barry draws from personal experience to probe deep into all aspects of gaining and expending personal clout.

Reflecting on life as a major college football coach, on politicians such as Dick Cheney, Newt Gingrich, and Jim Wright, or on such American athletes as world record-holding hurdler Renaldo Nehemiah, Barry pushes past the glamour and glitz to tackle the nitty-gritty, down-and-dirty stratagems that create and destroy America's most powerful figures.

Barry's witty and well-informed narrative voice keeps the discussion from becoming purely abstract. His numerous examples, including candid moments from his own life, focus on people and specific events that remain--and should remain--in the public eye and imagination.

Revealing the ethos, skills, and brinksmanship inherent in both sports and politics, Barry draws parallels between the two, often presenting sports as a metaphor for understanding the American political scene. His poignant memoirs of coaching football, and his highly opinionated voice within the other essays, make Barry as much a character and example in the book as any of the people he profiles.

Drawing on his 1989 book on the rise of Newt Gingrich and the fall of Jim Wright, *The Ambition and the Power: A True Story of Washington*, Barry re-envision a book-length argument as a series of profiles and shorter articles. Barry creates in *Power Plays: Politics, Football, and Other Blood Sports* an engrossing and disturbing primer on American politics, helping readers to understand how might is made, manipulated, and lost.

John M. Barry lives in New Orleans and Washington, D.C., and is the author of the award-winning *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (1997) and *The Ambition and the Power: A True Story of Washington* (1989). Former Washington editor of *Dun's Review*, he has published articles in *Sports Illustrated*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, *Esquire*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.



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