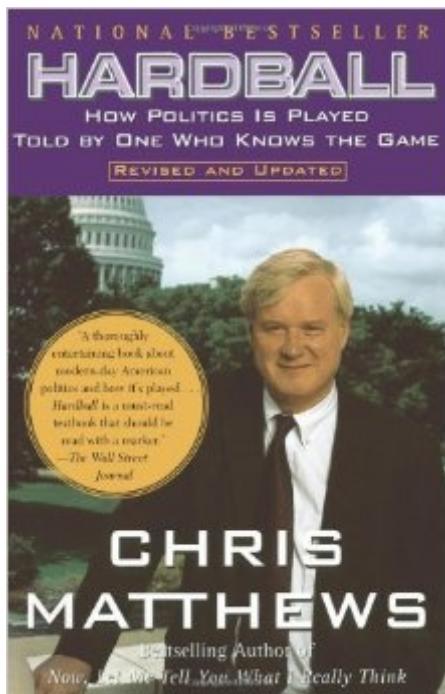


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Hardball: How Politics Is Played, Told By One Who Knows The Game



Synopsis

How politics is played by one who knows the game...host of MSNBC's Hardball, Chris Matthews. Chris Matthews has spent a quarter century on the playing field of American politicsâ "from right-hand man of Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill to host of NBC's highest rated cable talk show Hardball. In this revised and updated edition of his political classic, he offers fascinating new stories of raw ambition, brutal rivalry, and exquisite seduction and reveals the inside rules that govern the game of power.

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Customer Reviews

Chris Matthews set out to write an honest rulebook on how the game of politics is played and he did just that. It is a nonpartisan guide. Matthews believes that the rules of politics apply to every human life, not just to senators and congressmen. Here are some of the rules of politics as put forth by Matthews:

1. It is not who you know, it is who you get to know. Washington is like working in a big Company where it is who you know is more important than what you know. The key to your success in life is based upon your personal relationships. Nearly everyone in Washington owes their job to a personal friend.
2. All politics is local.
3. It is better to receive than give. Ask for help. The more someone invests in you, the more committed they become to seeing you succeed. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "If you want to make a friend, let someone do you a favor."
4. Dance with the one that brung ya. It is about loyalty to your side. Think about the loyalty that Ronald Reagan had to the conservative movement.
5. Keep your enemies in front of you. Great politicians always stay on

speaking terms with fierce opponents to show strength, obtain useful information and because they know that they may have to call on the opponent as an ally some day.⁶ Don't get mad, don't get even, get ahead. Focus on getting past your adversaries.⁷ Leave no shot unanswered. Always respond to attacks quickly and effectively by attacking the credibility of your opponent, ridicule your opponent, and reverse the attack so it backfires against your opponent.⁸ Only talk when it improves the silence. Know when to speak and when to listen.⁹ Always concede on principal. In many cases, the best way to achieve one's goal is to concede the argument. Great politicians often negotiate by telling their adversaries exactly what they want to hear. By conceding the principal at issue, they manipulate their critics into accepting their views.¹⁰ Hang a lantern on your problem. When in doubt, get it out.¹¹ Spin, spin & spin. Always turn negatives into positives.¹² The press is the enemy.¹³ Have the reputation of power. Political leaders become powerful by appearing powerful. There are six ways to appear powerful. They are: play your strengths, lowballing, sandbagging, creating new commandments, passing the buck, and put your opponent in a "put up or shut up" position.¹⁴ Positioning yourself to the voters as they desire to see you.

The book is an excellent source of info for an aspiring politician or just someone who is curious about how politics in America work. Matthews talks about several ways in which to make it in politics and among them are: stay ahead of your enemies, "don't get mad; don't get even; get ahead" and "it's better to receive than to give." The best part of the book is that Matthews doesn't merely give a list of political objectives, he shows how successful politicians have put his strategies into practice, and how these strategies helped those politicians. Another great part about the book is that the reader gets an insight to how politics in Washington are done...since Matthews was in the govt.; he gives several insights about the administrations of such presidents as Reagan and Carter. However one criticism of the book is that, at times it drags. This is why I couldn't give it 5 stars. Sometimes Matthews tends to be a little too specific in his details and the point of the chapter is momentarily lost. This is evident in his discussion of Reagan's push for the MX missile and discussions of former employer, Tip O'Neil. On the whole, though, the book is a great way to get on the right track in politics. And some suggestions may be useful outside of the world of politics.

I'll admit it, I'm a progressive. I also think that Chris Matthews is a first class jerk with a completely unethical view on what's acceptable in this world. However, I'm extremely politically active, too. I bird dog presidential candidates (Bush, McCain, Gore, Bradley), worked on a Congressional campaign, etc. etc. And the truth is, as much as I hate the messenger, Matthews is pretty much dead on here

with this book. If you want to know how the game of politics is currently played, or at least get a taste for it, you should read this book. It doesn't mean you have to like it or think that Matthews is a great guy. But don't dismiss him out of ideology. If you do you'll miss out on the opportunity to learn things that you can use to your advantage. Activists, particularly those on the left, need to smarten up if they want to succeed politically. I certainly don't recommend everything Matthews is suggesting, but he's got some words of wisdom that should be utilized. For example, there's "hang a lantern on your problem." That means, if there's no upside, there's no way to "hide" your problem, expose it yourself! In the process you can define it in your own terms and look honorable in the process. I've used this in my own political work. Then there's "Leave no shot unanswered" which means you don't let the opposition nail you without coming back with an effective counterstatement. This, as Matthews points out, needs to be balanced against "only speak if it'll improve the silence." He gives good examples (although at times a little disjointed) on these and several other words of wisdom to the politically active. I can't say I like the playing field, but it is the playing field whether I like it or not. I can curse it, or use it to my advantage while also applying my own moral standards. If you're a progressive, slog through the baloney -- the fact that this book received a rave review from George Will should give you some indication of what I'm talking about -- but read this book and learn.

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