



# The Mogul: Eddie Gottlieb, Philadelphia Sports Legend and Pro Basketball Pioneer

*Rich Westcott*

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Russian-Jewish immigrant Eddie Gottlieb was one of the most powerful non-playing sports figures in Philadelphia from the 1920s until his death in 1979. A master promoter, Gottlieb - dubbed the Mogul for his business acumen - was influential in both basketball and baseball circles, as well as a colourful figure in his own right. A member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, Gottlieb founded, played, and coached for the legendary South Philadelphia Hebrew Association (SPHAS) basketball team in the 1920s and 1930s. Only 5' 8, Gottlieb was nevertheless a very good basketball player. But, it was behind the scenes where he excelled. He coached, helped form the National Basketball Association, and owned the Philadelphia Warriors franchise for many years. He signed Wilt Chamberlain to his first NBA contract. He also created the NBA's annual schedule of games for more than a quarter of a century. Outside basketball, Gottlieb's achievements included co-owning the Philadelphia Stars baseball team in the Negro Leagues and trying unsuccessfully to buy the Philadelphia Phillies. He was Philadelphia's leading sports booking agent from the 1920s into the 1950s for everything from sandlot baseball to semipro football to professional wrestling. Drawing upon dozens of interviews and archival sources, and featuring more than fifty photographs, *The Mogul* vividly portrays Eddie Gottlieb's pivotal role in both Philadelphia and American sports history.

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