

## Original ESPN anchor Lou Palmer dies at age 83



Lou Palmer, ESPN's original on-air commentator, died Friday in Wellington, Florida. He was 83. Palmer's death was confirmed by his daughter, Patty Puma-Conrad. She said he died after a battle with lung cancer.

Palmer was hired by ESPN in 1978, a year before the network officially was launched. He teamed with longtime WTIC Radio colleague Arnold Dean to broadcast ESPN's first live event in October 1978 -- a "demonstration" feed of a basketball game between the University of Connecticut and Athletes in Action -- for cable executives, according to the network's founder, Bill Rasmussen. Palmer also served as an original anchor and reporter for the network's flagship "SportsCenter" shows. He remained at ESPN until 1985.

"He was a friend and major contributor to building the strong foundation on which ESPN stands today," Rasmussen said in a statement.

ESPN said in a statement that Palmer brought "a professionalism to the network that helped establish a rock-solid foundation for SportsCenter and our baseball coverage. ESPN extends its sympathy to Lou's family and the many people he touched during his accomplished career."

Two of Palmer's original colleagues at ESPN -- Chris Berman and Bob Ley -- also remembered Palmer's contributions.

Said Berman: "Lou Palmer was a wonderful radio and television professional, and an even finer gentleman. He was one of the few employees here at ESPN before we went on the air. His love for baseball jumped through the screen and became an early hallmark of SportsCenter. Those of us who were young anchors --

Bob Ley, Tom Mees and I -- will forever be indebted to Lou for his guidance by example."

Ley called Palmer a "true ESPN original."

"He brought much-needed experience at the very beginning, a deep love of baseball, and the ability to write, anchor and bring authority to anything he touched," Ley said in a statement. "Lou was a joy to work with, a fellow Seton Hall Pirate, and in a newsroom where everyone had their nickname, he was universally known and loved as 'Sweet Lou.'"

Palmer also was one of the original studio anchors at WFAN Radio in New York and later served as a public-address announcer for Florida State League baseball games and official scorer for the St. Louis Cardinals' spring training games.

He played baseball for Seton Hall and later in the farm systems for the New York Giants and Chicago White Sox, where he was known by his given name, Lou Puma.

Funeral arrangements for Palmer are pending.

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