



Beyond the Game: The Collected Sportswriting of Gary Smith

Gary Smith

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“Sport comes to us in boxes—the perimeter of our TV screen or the boundary lines of fields and courts. As much as I enjoy what goes on inside those boxes, I’ve always had the urge to bust out of them. I’ve always had the feeling that the most compelling and significant story was the one occurring beyond the game—before it, after it, above it, or under it, deep in the furnace of the psyche. . . .”—From the Preface

Gary Smith’s sportswriting stands among the best journalism being written today. His award-winning stories shatter the confines of traditional sports reportage, getting beneath the wins and losses and penetrating into the hearts of the athletes themselves—into their lives and personal struggles, their communities and their worlds.

Beyond the Game brings together fifteen of Smith’s greatest stories, from groundbreaking profiles of international stars like Mike Tyson and Magic Johnson, to intimate looks at lesser-known athletes whose lives are driven by the thrill of competition and the love of a game. There is “Damned Yankee,” the heartbreaking story of John Malangone, who seemed destined to succeed Yogi Berra as the Yankees’ starting catcher—until his career was destroyed by the crushing weight of a childhood trauma that continued to haunt him. “Someone to Lean On” is the inspirational story of an extraordinary retarded man named Radio and the South Carolina high school football team that has adopted him for over thirty years. “Shadow of a Nation” tells of a Crow Indian community’s intense passion for basketball—and how former high school star Jonathan Takes Enemy must struggle to escape the tragic history of his tribe as he seeks a place in the world outside the reservation.

The stories in *Beyond the Game* are stories of dreams and fears, failure and triumph, self-destruction and salvation, set in the twilight shadows between the sun-drenched playing fields and brightly lit arenas at the heart of sports and the darkness of the locker rooms and lonely streets that lurk at their periphery. Each of Gary Smith’s moving stories will profoundly touch you and remain with you, long after you have closed the pages of this book.

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