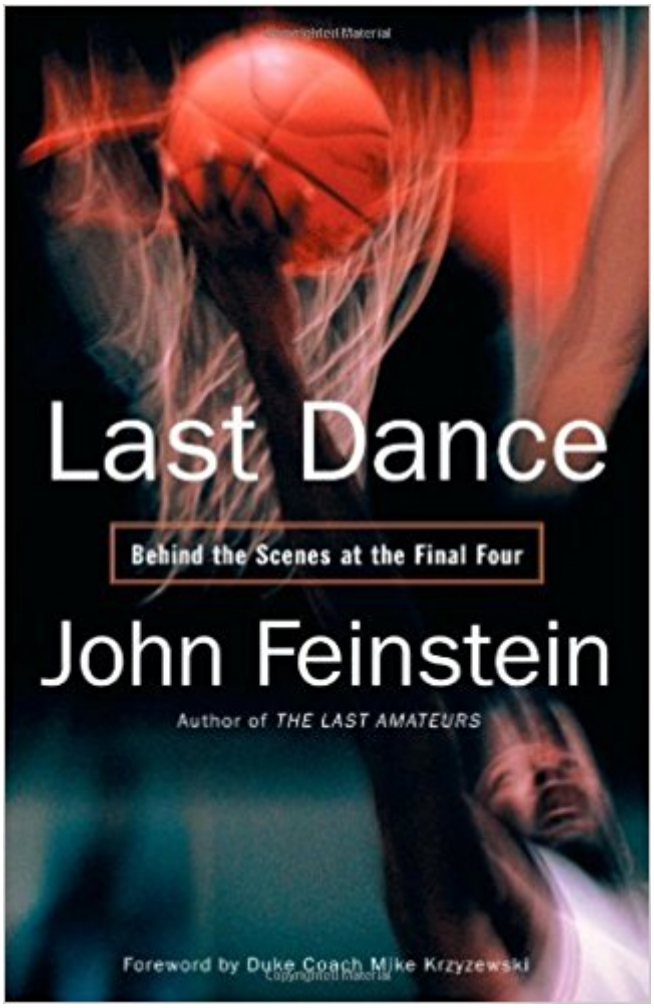
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Last Dance: Behind The Scenes At The Final Four



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Synopsis

There is no event in sports quite like the Final Four. John Feinstein will explore what it means to a school, a coach and a player to be in the Final Four or even at The Final. There are moving stories of players and coaches who thought they'd never make it to college basketball's final weekend, spectacular triumphs of the winning teams and heartbreaking defeat of those who missed the cut. He also brings us inspiring and dramatic stories from people behind the scenes: from officials and referees to scouts and ticket-scalpers. With the unflinching eye of a seasoned reporter and the remarkable skill of a true storyteller, Feinstein exposes the driving force behind one of the most revered events in American sports.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Feinstein is turning out the sports books faster than ever, as his whirlwind tour of the NCAA college basketball tournament follows quickly on the heels of his fall 2005 look at pro football, Next Man Up. Maybe that explains the somewhat rushed feel, as Feinstein skips briskly from one anecdote to the next. In his effort to depict the annual climax of "March Madness" from as many perspectives as possible, Feinstein collects stories from coaches, players, referees, sportscasters and others, more often than not finding the positive angle. Even Terry Howard's missed free throw during a 1975 semifinal game is turned into a reflection on what an honor it is just to be able to play in the Final Four. The closest Feinstein comes to controversy is when he criticizes the NCAA's recent decision to add a 65th team to the tournament. The account of last year's battle between Illinois and North Carolina for the championship is largely perfunctory; Feinstein is clearly much more interested in revisiting the past with coaching legends like Dean Smith and Mike Krzyzewski (who also supplies a

brief foreword). Then again, in all likelihood, so are most readers. 8 pages of photos. (Feb. 7) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review For sports-challenged individuals, the Final Four is the culmination of the NCAA men's college basketball season and the number-two American sports event, trailing only the Super Bowl. The four best teams from an initial field of 64 meet on semifinal Saturday to decide the participants in Monday's championship final. Feinstein, arguably the best book-length sports journalist working today, employs the 2005 weekend as the catalyst to discuss the history of the event, the key people, and, most significantly, the effect that involvement in the Final Four has had on participants' lives. The book is centered almost exclusively on the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big East Conference. Feinstein's jingoism translates to lots of Duke, North Carolina, Maryland, and Syracuse, with scant attention to the rest of the country with the exception of UCLA and coach John Wooden. That caveat aside, this is a terrific book. Feinstein goes behind the scenes to examine such matters as the often-controversial selection marathon, and the sometimes-petty rivalries between coaches. The anecdotes are entertaining, and the insights into the tournament's logistics fascinating, but what will linger most are the remembrances of players, especially those who ended up on the losing side. The best books take us to places we've never been and let us feel what life there is like. Welcome to the Final Four, courtesy of John Feinstein. Wes LukowskyCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

As a fan of John Feinstein and college basketball, I was looking forward to this book. Had I been able to find the unabridged version of the audio CD I would have bought it. As the only versions available were abridged, I held my nose and took the plunge. Although the subject matter is very interesting, the abridged version left out so much that I was disappointed in the book.

Last Dance is a behind the scenes look at the NCAA Final Four. The book is mostly built on reminisces and interviews with coaches, players, and even some announcers about what it's like to get to the Final Four and win a championship.The primary theme of the book is how important getting to a Final Four and winning a National Championship is for the players and coaches. It's something that for many players is a once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of team that puts its stamp on college basketball history. Whether a marginal player seeing little action or a star player going on to a successful NBA career, a Final Four appearance and a National Championship are lifetime achievements. And the bitter disappoint of losing in the Final Four lasts a lifetime as well.For

the most part this book is well written and interesting as we hear from players, coaches, and others involved about their experiences in the Final Four. It paints a well rounded picture of what participants go through during the course of the season, but especially during the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. While Feinstein does not go into great depth on the history of the Final Four, its history is told throughout the book.The one criticism this reader has of the book is it appears to be very Duke and North Carolina centric. While maybe that's because they have been to the Final Four so often, it's a bit off putting to be constantly hearing about these two schools at the expense of others who have made the Final Four. And while hearing different perspectives on the Final Four were interesting, there really wasn't anything new here either.My two favorite sections of the book were about UCLA coach John Wooden and his wife getting a spontaneous standing ovation from the coaches in the lobby at a Final Four and Bill Bradley's thoughts on his Final Four appearance (Bradley was a Princeton and NBA star, later a Senator and presidential candidate).The most interesting philosophical discussion was the impact of the tournament and a Final Four appearance or winning a championship on coaches. Would great coaches like Roy Williams of North Carolina have an incomplete legacy if they never won a championship? Fair or not, the answer is yes, even though the coaches don't like to say it. The pressure to win and win big is just as hot in college basketball as it is in professional sports, and coaches with great talent at big schools feel the heat. The impact of this pressure on coaches was well done in this book.Finally, the hype and hysteria that surround the Final Four today compared to years ago is also interesting to note and how this sea change in attention and hype have affected players and coaches and those gathering for their Final Four appearance is well done.This was definitely a book worth reading if you are a college basketball fan.

I am typically a big John Feinstein fan and look forward to his books. However, this one is not as engaging as most of his books. There are parts of the book that focus too much on Officials and Tournament Committee Members. I would say that these areas really slowed the book down. When he covers the coaches and the historical aspects of the game the book reconnects. If you are a true college hoop fan you will like it but not love it as some of his other books.

I am a big fan of John. I especially like his golf books. I thought this book got to granular on details that really weren't that interesting. I will still read his future books.

great job,you get the whole picture

Enjoyed the 'behind the scenes' at the Final Four, as well as the historical perspective on different coaches and teams.

good read, good stories, a bit too long on some chapters where you forget what the chapter was about

If you are a college basketball fan and love following the division tournaments and the NCAA tournament, this is a great read. It gives you an inside perspective from coaches, referees and players. The author also gives you some historical references as well. This is an enoyable book and I highly recommend it.

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