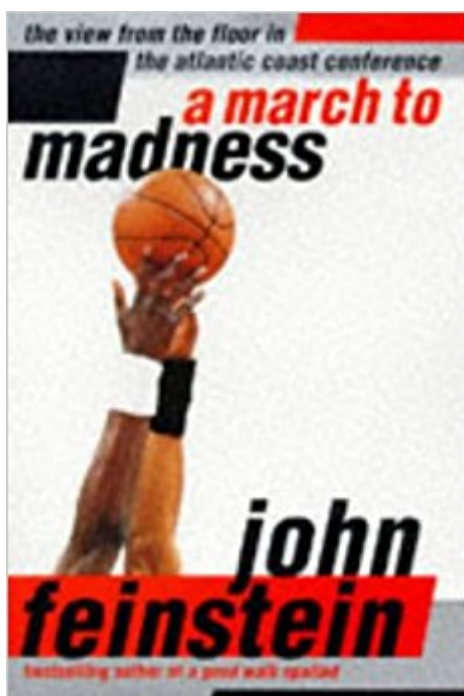


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A March To Madness: The View From The Floor In The Atlantic Coast Conference



Synopsis

From golf and football to tennis, basketball, and baseball, John Feinstein's incisive you-are-there portraits of players, coaches, and their games have set a new standard for sportswriting -- and become major national bestsellers. With *A March to Madness* Feinstein returns to the arena of his most successful book, *A Season on the Brink* -- and takes us inside college basketball's toughest league, the Atlantic Coast Conference, or ACC. This group of nine colleges is renowned for its championship teams -- one or more are almost always among the NCAA final four -- as well as for the top pros it has produced, including Michael Jordan, Grant Hill, and Kenny Anderson, to name just a few. Focusing on the personalities, the strategies, and the struggles of the conference's superlative coaches, Feinstein brings to life the dramatic 1996-97 season. With superstar Tim Duncan leading Wake Forest to unexpected heights and traditional favorite Duke benefiting from controversial victories, interest in the ACC has never been greater -- and Feinstein has never been more incisive. Taking us onto the courts and into the locker rooms, he gives us a vivid portrait of each team and each coach, revealing the rivalries and the friendships, the pressures and the joys, the victories and the defeats. Here is college basketball at its most exciting -- and John Feinstein at his best.

Book Information

Hardcover: 464 pages

Publisher: Little Brown & Co (T); 1st edition (January 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316277401

ISBN-13: 978-0316277402

Product Dimensions: 1.5 x 6.5 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 37 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,999,471 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in *Books > Sports & Outdoors > Basketball > College & University*

Customer Reviews

In terms of work ethic, John Feinstein is the sports equivalent of Stephen King: he's tireless, prolific, and multifaceted. With a past-performance line that includes *A Season on the Brink*, *A Good Walk Spoiled*, and *A Civil War*, he's regularly in the running for his genre's MVP. *A March to Madness*, which chronicles the 1996-97 Atlantic Coast Conference's ineluctable journey to March Madness,

continues his string. Exhaustively reported, and penned with as much poignancy as panache, it's the story of the most competitive college basketball conference in the U.S., filtered through the eyes--and complex lives--of its head coaches. Coaching young in-your-faces is never easy; it's even harder in a pressure cooker such as the ACC, where expectations are enormous, winning is essential, and an NCAA tournament bid is requisite for survival. Feinstein had remarkable access to his high-profile, high-strung subjects, such as Dean Smith, Bobby Cremins, and Mike Krzyzewski, and the drama he records is every bit as fast-paced and stunning as a close Duke-North Carolina game with the final seconds ticking off the clock.

The list of great sports books about anything but baseball is limited, but Feinstein (*A Civil War*, LJ 10/1/96) has increased it by one with this tour-de-force. Similar to his book about Indiana University Coach Bob Knight, *A Season on the Brink* (S. & S., 1988), Feinstein's latest covers one year with all of the teams in the perennially powerful Atlantic Coast Conference. After introducing each of the schools, their teams, their coaches, and their expectations for the 1996/97 basketball season, the book describes their progress week by week, culminating with Dean Smith's run to the NCAA Final Four. Such a detailed accounting of a sports season could seem interminable to readers, but Feinstein has again produced a narrative that is not only interesting but often exciting. He conveys the exhilaration of a road conference win and the gloom of a home loss. This book should appeal to all readers, not just to sports fans. Highly recommended for all libraries. William O. Scheeren, Hempfield Area H.S. Lib., Greensburg, Pa. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I have read several books written by coach K and as I am a Duke fan and none of these books have come close to John Finesteins "A March to Madness". If you are a fan of any team in the Atlantic Coast Conference that was actively a member of the conference of from the late 70's thru the late 90's, this is the book for you. Finestein spends time with the all the coaches and teams in the Atlantic Coast Conference and really gives a birds eye view for all the teams, coaches, and players. There is something for every ACC fan in "A March to Madness." It is really funny and interesting and it takes me back to a great era in ACC basketball. Best ACC basketball book I have read to date.

One might even call this book a crib sheet for pre-game and half time pep talks, but Feinstein also does his usual excellent job of "getting to know" the players, coaches and personalities. You'll get to know them too in this inside the lockerroom, season-long report. Feinstein's style is very easy to read and this book would be interesting to people from a sociological perspective in addition to

those who are basketball junkies like myself. Does the NCAA and its member institutions exploit athletes? Where did the fun go from the game--playing is a privilege and the competition in and of itself, along with a scholarship should be enough. Feinstein tackles these topics again in his more recent book *The Last Amateurs*. This is a very worthwhile read and more evenhanded and "fair" to the participants than *A Season on the Brink*. In fact Dean Smith would not let the author have the same access as every other coach b/c Feinstein is a Duke alum. And that is precisely why the Duke-UNC is one of the top 3 college sports rivalries.

Enjoyed this book very much even though it's probably 20 years old. Gives good insight into the ACC. Feinstein is a great author.

one of my favorite sports books. If you come from ACC country you will love it.

excellent

I grew up in the Southeast on a steady sports diet of ACC basketball and football, followed each team closely each year, and, of course, later attended an ACC school. I graduated in the spring of 1996 -- just a few months before the 1996-97 season Feinstein chronicles in this book began. So I thought I knew all about the ACC and its sundry characters. Boy was I wrong. Feinstein's insights and access showed me an entirely different side of the ACC world I only thought I knew. The spotlight here is on the coaches and we get to know most of them intimately -- their background, their fears, their expectations, their personal lives, their triumphs and failures. It's all fascinating stuff, although, frankly, I expected a little bit more about the players themselves. Instead, players like Tim Duncan and Vince Carter have mere bit parts in the background. But they were college players and I guess Feinstein really couldn't drag them into the commercial world of book writing. Since the focus of the book is on the coaches themselves, the amount of access each coach gave Feinstein set the tone for the entire project. It is more than obvious that coaches like Duke's Mike Krzyzewski, Maryland's Gary Williams, Wake Forest's Dave Odom, Clemson's Rick Barnes, Virginia's Jeff Jones, and Florida State's Pat Kennedy gave Feinstein as much access and interview time as he wanted and they are covered thoroughly in the book. On the other hand, it's apparent NC State's Herb Sendek, Georgia Tech's Bobby Cremins, and, most importantly, North Carolina's Dean Smith didn't give Feinstein nearly as much time, access, and information as the others. Smith, in particular, is portrayed as an outside, shadowy figure and a pretty mean one at that. Smith could

have helped by being more cooperative with Feinstein but, then again, Dean had a job to do and it didn't involve having a writer lurking around his locker room and office for a year. By contrast, Mike Krzyzewski apparently gave the Duke grad the keys to the Duke campus, and that, coupled with Duke's typically great season, give the book a decidedly uneven feel. I don't know if that is bias, but I do know when Duke's Greg Newton is mentioned more often than Wake's Tim Duncan or North Carolina's Vince Carter, it's a problem. As much as Feinstein tries to paint a complete portrait of all nine coaches and all nine schools, he simply cannot and the book suffers because of it. Nevertheless, *A MARCH TOWARD MADNESS* is a treat for ACC fanatics, college basketball fans, and anyone interested in the inner workings of the world of college coaching. The most amazing thing is, the ACC is such a colorful league, you could write a book like this about each and every season. The names may change (a lot of the coaches in this book are already gone) but the passion, the intensity, and the competitiveness are always there.

you will after reading this book. I read the "Madness" in my first year of college at UVA- the year after it was published- and a love affair began. Whereas I used to not care less about basketball, this book signed over my life to the ACC. The soap opera-like stories, play-by-play excitement, and obvious love for the game captured me, and ever since I have been a virtual hermit during March. The biases are there, but that's part of the charm. In the ACC you love your team, but you love the game even more.

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