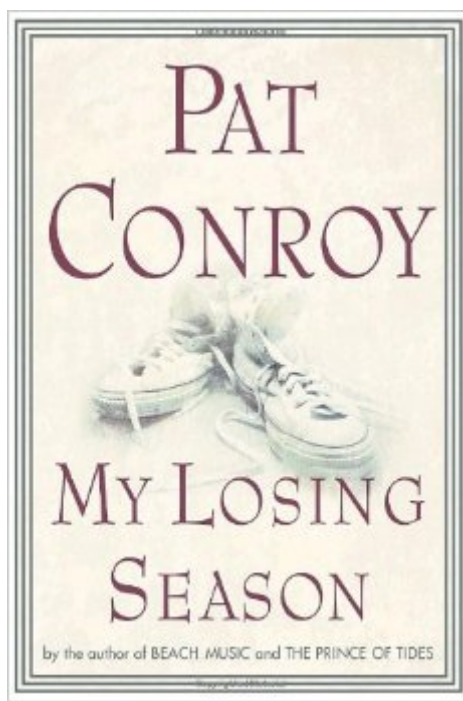


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My Losing Season



Synopsis

PAT CONROY'S "AMERICA'S MOST BELOVED STORYTELLER" IS BACK! I was born to be a point guard, but not a very good one. . . .There was a time in my life when I walked through the world known to myself and others as an athlete. It was part of my own definition of who I was and certainly the part I most respected. When I was a young man, I was well-built and agile and ready for the rough and tumble of games, and athletics provided the single outlet for a repressed and preternaturally shy boy to express himself in public....I lost myself in the beauty of sport and made my family proud while passing through the silent eye of the storm that was my childhood. • So begins Pat Conroy's journey back to 1967 and his startling realization that this season had been seminal and easily the most consequential of my life. • The place is the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, that now famous military college, and in memory Conroy gathers around him his team to relive their few triumphs and humiliating defeats. In a narrative that moves seamlessly between the action of the season and flashbacks into his childhood, we see the author's love of basketball and how crucial the role of athlete is to all these young men who are struggling to find their own identity and their place in the world. In fast-paced exhilarating games, readers will laugh in delight and cry in disappointment. But as the story continues, we gradually see the self-professed mediocre athlete merge into the point guard whose spirit drives the team. He rallies them to play their best while closing off the shouts of "Don't shoot, Conroy" that come from the coach on the sidelines. For Coach Mel Thompson is to Conroy the undermining presence that his father had been throughout his childhood. And in these pages finally, heartbreakingly, we learn the truth about the Great Santini. In *My Losing Season* Pat Conroy has written an American classic about young men and the bonds they form, about losing and the lessons it imparts, about finding one's voice and one's self in the midst of defeat. And in his trademark language, we see the young Conroy walk from his life as an athlete to the writer the world knows him to be.

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Customer Reviews

There's a scene in a 1970s movie in which Gene Hackman tries to grind up a broken wine glass in a garbage disposal. Reading this book is a lot like that. I picked up "My Losing Season" not as a great fan of Pat Conroy or as a former athlete. I was attracted more by the theme of loss and its lessons. And I expected a different personal story than the one Conroy tells. The losing basketball season in his last year as a cadet at The Citadel in Charleston, SC, is a pretext for a much deeper theme - survival in the face of humiliation. And it's not the losses of the games that are humiliating. On the one hand is the brutal and unrelenting contempt of his marine colonel father, a child abuser and wife beater. On the other hand is the withering scorn of Conroy's arbitrary and capricious coach, Mel Thompson. Both, in Conroy's account, do their best to beat the spirit out of the boy who has grown into an indomitable (though undersized and modestly talented) point guard for his team. And all of this takes place in the regimented, fierce, all-male environment of The Citadel in the 1960s, where incoming boys are routinely broken by the merciless hazing of their upperclassmen. Humiliation is a much more difficult subject than loss to deal with. Loss leaves scars, but humiliation remains an open wound, and in writing about it there is the risk of slipping into the tug of war between self-pity and self-blame. Conroy takes us there sometimes, and those are the parts of his story that are lacerating. But win or lose, the ups and downs of the season are fascinating and the accounts of the games are thrilling. As a writer, he has a gift for hustling the reader with suspense and drama and sudden shifts of mood.

I was a bit unsure at first if I was ready to read a non fiction work by Pat Conroy. I enjoy non fiction and have lately devoted most of my reading to it, but I wasn't sure what I was going to be getting when I read the description of "My Losing Season". After all, who cares about an unknown college basketball team that played in the sixties? I haven't read all of Mr. Conroy's books yet, not because I don't think he is one of the great writers of all time, but because I know that I'll only get to read them once for the first time. My introduction into his worlds of fiction caught me by surprise because I was well into 'The Prince of Tides' before I realized that the book wasn't a true story. I now realize after reading 'My Losing Season' that everything he writes is true, even the fiction. I would have broken

down crying several times during the reading of this book, but my heart is still guarded by never sleeping sentinels whose tireless detail is to walk the stone walls that guard my interior. Mr. Conroy manages to gain an entrance, however, and at times during reading his work I feel a sense of hatred towards him. Not meanness, just anger with no where to go. So what is it about this book, this story that makes it so worth reading? The nakedness that Pat Conroy brings to the page. The truth. Simple and raw and courageous. Enduring and joyful, sad and painful. I envy his memories, his legacy, his past, not because I feel that the journey was easy or he was lucky, but because whatever molded him into the man he became, whatever blessing or curse that was bestowed him at birth, whatever angels or demons followed his path, he has been able to live outside of the shells and caves and fortresses that most of us dwell in.

MY LOSING SEASON is a sports memoir as honest and heartbreaking as a double overtime loss to a hated rival. It is also the only memoir that deals directly with the true story --- step by step, game by game --- of an NCAA Division I basketball team that won a mere eight games (out of 25). This is counterintuitive for a sports book. You see, we are supposed to remember those athletes and teams that never lose, the Knute Rocknes, not the Bill Buckners. Yet both examples offer powerful stories. This was the only type of sports book Pat Conroy could write. In a moment of kismet while on the book tour for BEACH MUSIC, Conroy reconnected with his former teammate John DeBrosse. They found themselves replaying the minutiae of a loss on a basketball court 30 years ago. Both men were marked by that losing season. This encounter served as catalyst to search for meaning from this lost season. Conroy devoted two years to pouring through old newspaper clips, interviewing former teammates and diving into his own memories to reignite the fires of regret and disappointment. He recalls that the best memories his teammates had from the 1966-67 Citadel Bulldogs Varsity Basketball team were of the great players they went up against. They remember the Michael Jordans --- or in this case the Johnny Moates. Conroy writes, "In every home I entered as I reconstituted my team, I found instead of memory scar tissue and nerve damage. There is no downside to winning. It feels forever fabulous. But there is no teacher more discriminating or transforming than loss." This memoir peeks audaciously into the minds of players on a losing team: what made them tick, what they thought and who made them what they became. So the daring part is --- who cares about a bunch of losers?

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