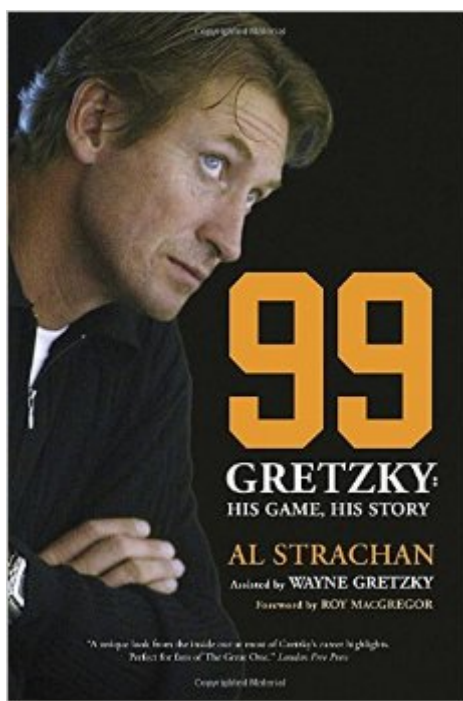


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99: Gretzky: His Game, His Story



Synopsis

Published with Wayne Gretzky's cooperation, this is the definitive biography of the greatest player that hockey has ever seen. From the time Wayne Gretzky began playing organized hockey at the age of six, his genius was evident. He scored one goal in his first season and 378 in his fifth. With the Edmonton Oilers in the 1980s and later with the Los Angeles Kings, he was virtually unstoppable. He won nine Hart trophies as the leading scorer, and four Stanley Cups. Later, with the St. Louis Blues and New York Rangers, he continued to show leadership, finesse, and grace both on and off the ice. Based on thousands of hours of conversations with Gretzky, including new interviews, 99 details Gretzky's move to L.A., his role as player and coach for Canada Cup and Olympic teams, and career highlights such as his greatest goal and greatest game. Gretzky also discusses with Strachan the challenges in his career--the truth about the gambling "scandal" and the behind-the-scenes negotiations before his trade to the St. Louis Blues. In this revealing, insightful, and definitive biography, Al Strachan takes readers on a most remarkable journey and details the life of Wayne Gretzky as it has never been told before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Let me first make two things clear. I think Wayne Gretzky is without doubt the greatest hockey player ever and exceptionally nice and modest guy for a superstar athlete. Al Strachan is right about both of these things and although he goes overboard in repeating them (they're on both the first and last pages of the book, and seem to be on half the others), I see no reason to disagree with either of those points. Having said that, a biography is supposed to be objective and even if you admire your

subject a great deal as an athlete and as a person, you should at least make some sort of effort to present him in an objective manner. Strachan is Gretzky's friend and clearly afraid of putting in even a single little thing suggesting that Gretzky might have not always been perfect. Here are some examples: The Stanley Cup triumphs of Edmonton are presented almost exclusively as Gretzky's successes. Conveniently, there is not a single mention of the 90 Cup the Oilers won without Gretzky. Everybody knows that was a great team that could have won cups without Gretzky. They did exactly that just in the second season after trading Gretzky. A proper analysis of the team would have taken some of the limelight off of Gretzky, but now it all comes across as juvenile hero-worship. Nobody is questioning that Gretzky was the most important player in that great Edmonton team. But leaving out their Cup success without Gretzky is just intellectually dishonest. If you didn't know your hockey history, you'd get the image that Oilers were nothing after Gretzky. Gretzky's high stick on Gilmour in the conference final against Toronto in 1993 is downplayed. Many times it is mentioned that nobody can tell what would have happened if that call was made.

Al Strachan's book is a nice biography of Wayne Gretzky's achievements in hockey. He touches briefly on all aspects of Gretzky's career and gives you just enough insight to wet your appetite before moving on to his next topic. Unfortunately, the book as a whole was like eating cotton candy: sweet and tasty but not filling. Strachan, who is a hockey journalist and a good friend of Gretzky, certainly provided some glimpses under the curtain (or under the ice if you will), but for the most part it is just a regurgitation of Wayne's many achievements and almost reads like a lifetime achievement award video. The information skips around, touches on elements and then moves on with little additional analysis or substantive counter points of view. After Gretzky's short time in St. Louis (that debacle was an interesting), Strachan chooses to focus more on Wayne's involvement with the World Cup and Olympics (interesting and deserving of discussion) ignoring his time in New York. As a Ranger fan I was looking forward to some glimpses into this tenure of his career. The book's only Ranger focus was on his last game and when he decided to retire. Strachan's close relationship with Gretzky also made the read slightly tedious with his constant praise and biased view. I am surprised the title of the book wasn't "Gretzky: A March Towards Sainthood". Granted, the man was a great player, ambassador, and is seemingly a genuinely decent guy off the ice, but there were too many times when Strachan would blame the failures of other people if Gretzky didn't achieve "greatness", or ignore many of the contributions of other people in helping Gretzky when he did achieve "greatness".

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