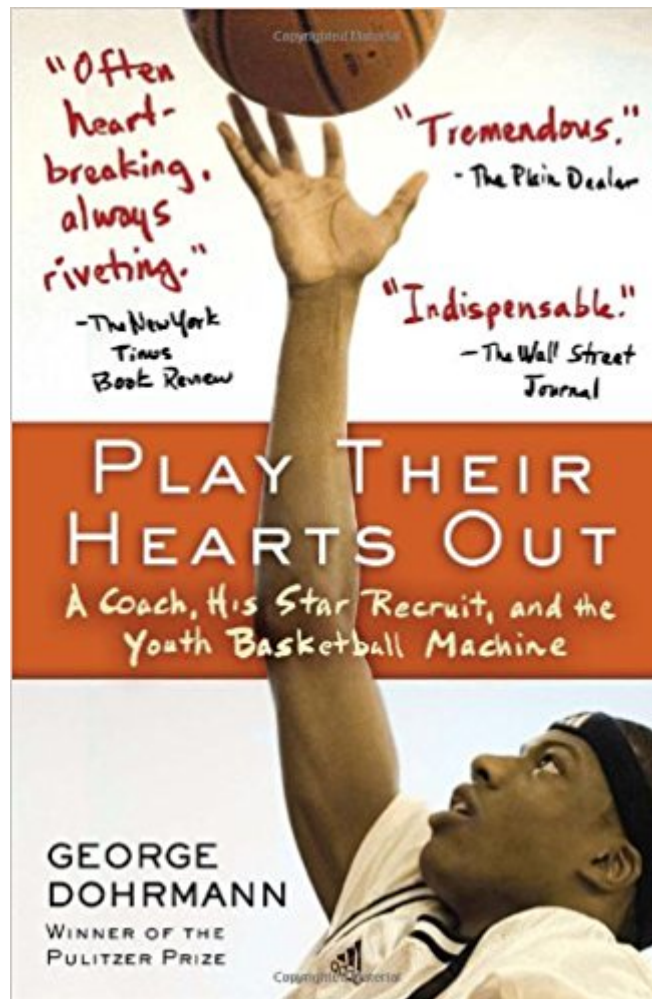


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# Play Their Hearts Out: A Coach, His Star Recruit, And The Youth Basketball Machine



## Synopsis

Winner of the PEN/ESPN Award for Literary Sportswriting Winner of the Award for Excellence in the Coverage of Youth Sports • Eight years of unfettered access and a keen sense of a story's deepest truths allow Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist George Dohrmann to take readers inside the machine that produces America's basketball stars. *Play Their Hearts Out* reveals a cutthroat world where boys as young as eight or nine are subjected to a dizzying torrent of scrutiny and exploitation. At the book's heart are the personal stories of two compelling figures: Joe Keller, an ambitious coach with a master plan to find and promote the next LeBron, and Demetrius Walker, a fatherless latchkey kid who falls under Keller's sway and struggles to live up to unrealistic expectations. Complete with a new where-are-they-now Epilogue by the author, this thoroughly compelling narrative exposes the gritty reality that lies beneath so many dreams of fame and glory. • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST SPORTS BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES • THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR • KIRKUS REVIEWS • Look for the exclusive conversation between George Dohrmann and bestselling author Seth Davis in the back of the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having read "Friday Night lights", seen the movie and watched the series, I was sceptical about this book being able to contend with such quality. I am now a believer, this is a fine book, well-researched, well-written and a stunning display of how adults in the US are able to manipulate young kids into becoming their "meal tickets". I had no idea that kids as young as 10 or 11 could

end-up on mini-pro teams, that there were men (coaches) who would prey upon these young basketball players in order to earn money and prestige for themselves. I was stunned to read that the major sports supplies businesses would pay and promote these ethics in their own bid to increase corporate profits. That so many parents allowed their young children to be manipulated in such a way was an astounding revelation. This book illuminates behaviours and actions that are scandalously wrong and need to be halted. The "coach" featured in this book, a certain Joe Keller, is "on the make" and searching for any way to promote himself. He signs these young boys to a "team", uses them in every way possible, showing zero concern for their physical or mental health, building his own reputation through the efforts of the young boys in his care. He has no scruples, he lies to the boys, manipulates them against each other, "buys" boys from other teams, and generally comes across as one of the more unappealing characters ever to see the light of day. It is appalling to read that young boys, as young as 10 or 11 are being "scouted" for pro-like teams and worked day and night, to the detriment of their education. The parents appear to be as bad as Mr. Keller, willingly turning their young children over to this brute, on the mere chance that this child might someday reach the NBA and enrich the parents.

What if I were to tell you that if you come with me and read this review, you'll make it someday. I'll do whatever it takes for you to read this review, because that's how confident I am that you are special. Honestly, I've never met anyone like you. You're incredible. We're going to be a team, you and I. You're so awesome. What? Your mom can't afford rent? Done. Helping you means that much to me. I'll always be there for you. OK, yes, we're like family. Every step of the way, you can rely on me. I can get you where you need to go. I have connections. Trust me.

Review: What's great about this book is that it's not just for the basketball minded. In fact, it's an interesting study in human behavior, people using people to get ahead - only, in part, the people being used are 10 year olds. From chapter to chapter you have to remind yourself that these are just kids. Seriously. The pictures before every chapter helped remind you of that important detail. The narrative does a great job depicting the decisions and scenarios that surround these children at every turn. They're children. Before you know it, you involve yourself in those decisions. But believe me, you very rarely win. Shoe companies are using the coaches, coaches are using the kids, and the kids (rather their parents) are using the coaches. In the end, who wins? Bittersweet wins. College scholarships are on the horizon for some of these kids, that's the sweet part, and there are some real heroes in this story. The bitter comes with the success of the main (adult) antagonist/protagonist that with every chapter aims to "coach" his way into millions. Disliking he and the system he rode in on is the easy

part. The hard part comes with, perhaps, finding yourself rooting against his teams at these kids expenses.

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