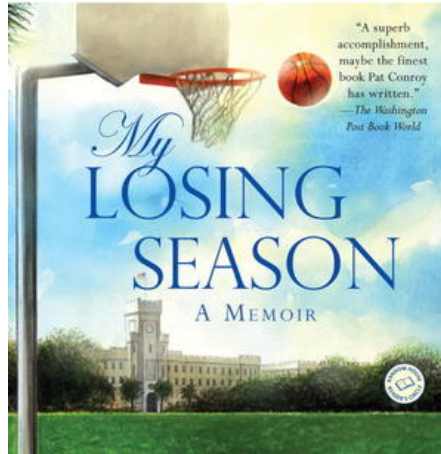


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

PAT
CONROY



My Losing Season: A Memoir

Pat Conroy

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My Losing Season: A Memoir Pat Conroy

PAT CONROY—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.

From the Hardcover edition.

My Losing Season: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review My Losing Season: A Memoir for online ebook

Cindy Leighton says

Listening to this book in one "sitting" as I drove 1,000 miles after leaving my son at college for the first time. . . perfect book to remind me of the incredible bonding that takes place among young men at college and how crucial this time period is for boys/men to fight through together - without their mommies :-).

I was stunned by the abuse Conroy overcame - I had read many of his other books about his father, and his father had seemed tough and overbearing, but deep down lovable. This memoir reveals what Conroy says is his true father - a horribly cruel man who humiliated and beat his son. For this son to then go to the Citadel and endure physical and emotional hazing and then to play basketball at the Citadel for a harsh coach - and come out of all of this strong and with material for writing. . . amazing.

I love Conroy's way with words, and loved being able to read about how he developed from a point guard and cadet who read voraciously in high school but wrote some pretty hokey poetry as a college student - to the amazing author he became, was fascinating. He credits his mother's love of reading, and several significant teachers who encouraged and challenged him along the way. "The great teachers fill you up with hope and shower you with a thousand reasons to embrace all aspects of life."

I love Pat Conroy, I love basketball, and I love writers - how could I not love this book? As a woman I loved being able to get this little glimpse into the secret world of male bonding, the good and the bad.

Cathrine ?? says

4+★

In these autobiographical pages the author delves into his heartbreaking childhood at the mercy of a brutal father and his four years as point guard for the Citadel basketball team through its final losing season. It's a true life coming of age tale recounting how the game helped him become the man who wanted to be the writer. He describes his book as **"an act of recovery"** and explains how **"losing prepares you for the heartbreak, setback, and tragedy that you will encounter in the world more than winning ever can."** It is also a window into his earlier fiction based on his military father's cruel parenting but without the softer sides added to make the books more palatable. This is a *the truth will set you free* rendering and it's horrific to bear witness to in parts.

"As a boy, I had constructed a shell for myself so impenetrable that I have been trying to write my way out of it for over thirty years, and even now I fear I have barely cracked its veneer. It is as rouged and polished and burnished as the specialized glass of telescopes, and it kept me hidden from the appraising eyes of the outside world long into manhood. But most of all it kept me hidden and safe from myself ... Several times in my life I have gone crazy, and I could not even begin to tell you why. The sadness collapses me from the inside out, and I have to follow the thing through until it finishes with me."

There is a lot of the sport detailed in its pages and since I am not a fan it did get tedious in parts, but the personal recollections and purpose behind it transform this into a worthy reading experience with plenty of

five star passages.

Thank you and RIP Mr. Conroy. Your books have a special place in my heart.

Lori Masad says

I fell in love with Pat Conroy's writing style after moving to S.C. (he's from here). Up until that point, I had not read any of his books or seen any of his movies. Now I'm obsessed. I'm nearly through all of his books, but it took me until this one, "My Losing Season", to truly understand his relationship with his father. This book, even more than "The Death of Santini", helped me gain that understanding and it made me smile when I reached the very end. I listened to the Audible version, which includes a spoken piece by the author at the very end. If that is not part of the printed book, you won't get the same feeling & sense of understanding I did at the end. I am not going to provide spoilers, but I highly recommend listening to the audio version that includes a message from Pat Conroy at the end.

Kelly says

I didn't expect to like this book, as I don't follow basketball (or really sports at all). But this isn't a basketball story, it's a lovely and poignant coming of age story. It made me want my son, who is just a little tyke now, to know the beauty of being a part of a team.

Rob says

This is an intense memoir that teaches lessons learned and perseverance even under losing circumstances. Conroy's early life that helped shape his later novels is all here--his abusive father, his military training and college life, etc... I'm not sure if a non athletic reader would lack the schema necessary for the basketball action parts. But if you have ever fell in love with a sport that helped you escape the troubles of childhood or gave you discipline and focus, this is your book. But even more, I enjoyed the parts about Conroy's writing and literature studies as a student, which were looked down upon as unmanly in the military college he attended. The prologue, last chapter, and epilogue are especially riveting. How refreshing to read about how refusing to quit during a losing season can shape character and still leave cherished memories for an athlete--especially in this era of cheating with steroids or winning at all costs or leading a less than exemplary life off the field. For me, an aging ex-athlete, this memoir stuck with me and is right up there with my other favorite memoirs such as *The Color of Water*; although Conroy's book speaks more to my male white life.

Christina says

Conroy will always be one of my favorite writers because of "The Prince of Tides," "Lords of Discipline" and "The Great Santini." He writes beautifully and has true command of the English language. But this book

was so painfully boring that I finally decided to give up after reading 200 pages. There are way too many books I want to read, I shouldn't waste my time on books that I dread picking up.

Jason says

My first Pat Conroy book. He's a masterful writer.

Ron says

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. As an observer of character, he vividly brings to life the individual boys who make up the team. As someone deeply wounded, he is able to freely and convincingly express the many articulations of the heart - especially love, admiration, and gratitude.

Once I started into this book, I could not put it down. It kept me reading late into the night. And when I wasn't reading, it filled my thoughts, as I'm sure it will for a long time. It's a troubling book that wants to resolve a host of dark memories. And it may well want to show the reader how to do the same. I'm not sure that it's completely successful in either regard. And maybe that's the point. It's enough to recast humiliation as loss. That is a wound that can eventually heal.

Danielle says

Another book I pulled from my bookshelves while riding out our snowpocalypse. I picked up this advanced reader's copy back when I was working at Barnes and Noble. The book was hugely popular when it was

released, but I never got around to reading it until now. In the book Pat Conroy explores his life through his love of basketball, particularly through his senior year season on the Citadel basketball team. Although it is a lot about basketball and the games that team played, it also explores his whole life, particularly his relationship with his mentally and physically abusive father. The book is probably more interesting to someone who like college basketball, which I do, but it has enough other stuff in it to keep the attention of people who aren't so interested in basketball. The book talks a lot about the coach of Citadel's team during Pat Conroy's tenure. My one complaint with the book is that through the entire book he seemed to be painted as this villain who ruined his team and many of his players through meanness and spite, but yet at the end Conroy reveals how much respect he has for the coach and how all but 3 of the guys on the team really loved him. It didn't really compute for me. I've definitely had experiences with teachers who I hated when I was in their class, but afterwards respected them for how well they prepared me for my future, so I guess Pat Conroy must have experienced something similar. I still don't really understand though.

John says

As a basketball player and a major participant in several losing seasons i am probably biased. But, Conroy does a great job of telling the story of his losing season as a senior at the Citadel. Lots of basketball action, but a great underlying message that goes far beyond the sport.

Jacki says

I know this is a strange thing to say about a book that is mainly about basketball, but I enjoyed this book with the exception of the play-by-play basketball game parts. I thought the team dynamics, Citadel life, his crazy coach and his mean father were all really good but the basketball parts I could take or leave.

I am glad I read it because I liked learning about this authors life and how he came to be an author and the different parts of his real life and basketball career that translated into his books. Also, he really does have a way with words. Writing a book like this, I think you stand a good chance of making it all too mushy and nostalgic, but he didn't do that. He maintained a sense of wonder at his past without totally going overboard. I liked that.

Glenn says

Another deeply emotional character-driven angst-ridden exposé of the hell, honor, discipline, brotherhood of cadets at the Citadel. His prose is as tasty as a southern barbecue savory, spicy, and delicious.

Kyle says

"My Losing Season" is a powerful book that uses the author's losing 1966-1967basketball season at The Citadel to explore whether one learns more from winning or from losing. From the opening line, "I was born to be a point guard, but not a very good one," to the end, Conroy has a gift for memorable, descriptive writing.

I should preface my review by stating I don't enjoy basketball, which includes playing it growing up and now watching it live or on TV. In High School P.E., they nicknamed me "The Fouler" because I never made the transition from football where it is a good thing to knock people down and take the ball away! With that said, I thoroughly enjoyed this book because it is so much more than a story about the game of basketball. This is a memoir of Pat Conroy's life from the time he first picked up a basketball at age nine to his adult years where he became a successful writer. But even more than that, it is a compelling story about endurance, hustle, and following one's dreams.

While I felt great distress as Pat Conroy described his violent upbringing at the hands of an abusive father, I thrilled in the way God always seemed to provide for Pat. I also valued the lessons Pat learned from his losing season, the special memories he shared with his teammates, and how that season impacted all the players.

Catherine says

As is usual for me with Pat Conroy, I find myself with mixed emotions. On the negative side, I always find Conroy a bit operatic. He generally uses two or three adjectives where one would do, over the top metaphors, and highly dramatic phrasing. I normally like a much more understated style. And I feel the same discomfort with Conroy's self-flagellation for things like protesting the Vietnam war instead of serving and not being the world's best point guard. I realize some of this is his lifelong depression speaking, but it's still too much. Further, I don't think I can agree with Conroy on the life and death significance of his college basketball games. Finally, I dislike the fact that except for Conroy's unpredictable and confusing mother, not one woman who appears in the book emerges as a real person — they are all "beautiful," "lovely," and "brilliant" ciphers. And now that I've explained why Conroy always grates on me a bit, here's why I still think this was a wonderful listen, admirably narrated by Chuck Montgomery, with a little bonus recording of Conroy himself speaking about the book at the end. First, Conroy has a compelling story to tell about how it feels to be subjected to cruel tyranny from older men — including in this book not only his infamous father, the Great Santini, but his very abusive and mercurial college basketball coach. The book's backdrop, Conroy's itinerant childhood in the service of his father's military career, and his attendance at the rigidly disciplined Citadel, just adds to that oppressive history. Second, Conroy loves and understands basketball, and this book actually made this game much clearer to me too. And third, Conroy tells us a great deal in this book about his own post-college life, and since he is a fine author, it is interesting to learn what came after the traumatic childhood and young manhood that are the subject of almost all his novels. Overall, this is a worthy read.

David says

This is a good book, albeit one that needed a more forceful editor. Pat Conroy is a particularly emotional and effusive author who has a tendency to use superlatives about everything in his life. I didn't mind that for 90% of the book, but after a while, it begins to grate. Conroy is always a failure, a bad husband, an unworthy friend while the people in his life are giants of humanity, saints and true companions. Of course, neither is the case. The same emotional element holds true with his writing, which is very good and engaging but at the same time wanders all over the place. The irony of this book is that it is an undisciplined work about The Citadel, a school that is symbolic of discipline.

It is about the 1966-67 Citadel basketball team. This is a team that had a losing season under a bad coach, and Conroy tells that tale beautifully. The melancholy, enigmatic and harsh coach, especially, is the star (or, anti-star) of the book, along with Conroy's abusive father. I personally believe that if the book had been more restricted in its scope, i.e sticking to the 1966-67 basketball season, it could have gone down as a true classic, especially in the genre of sports. However, Conroy, his editor, or both, allow the book to get out well out of hand and move well beyond the central narrative.

There are tales of Conroy's abusive childhood. Stories about the mothers of girls he dated. Stories about teammates who went on to be prisoners of war in Viet Nam. Accounts of how Conroy reconciled with his father years after the basketball season. A dialogue between Conroy and one of the *fictional* characters in one of his *other* books, "The Lords of Discipline" (huh? oh, the fictional character is a basketball player...and the book is about basketball and...) There are ruminations about the nature of time and the general philosophy of time. Yes, philosophy of time. It goes on and on. The saving grace of all of these departures is that they are interesting and well written so they don't generate resentment, but the result is a great book about basketball surrounded by a big, entertaining but sloppy mess. Given Pat Conroy's personality, I blame his editor.

All that being said, there was never a time when I was reading this book that I was bored or wondering when it would end. The subject matter of the coach, the team and the ill-fated 66-67 basketball season was always interesting and engaging. But soon, the author is off telling us about how he almost got into a fist fight in Hardees in 1995 over Shannon Faulkner going to the Citadel and I found myself wondering: How did we get here? So, a worthy read, but a sprawling, messy work at the same time.

Betsy says

I was first introduced to author Pat Conroy when I read 'South of Broad', which I loved. I also enjoyed 'My Losing Season', based on his senior year of college at The Citadel. In addition to focusing on the basketball team's woes and their tyrant coach, Conroy weaves in the conflicts he had throughout his childhood with his physically and verbally abusive father as well as the lasting affects that has had on his life. I found the last 100 or so pages the best part of the book.

Corinne says

Eh, this was an OK book. I'll start by saying that I'm an admittedly hard sell on memoirs.

I found this one to be slow moving. Pat Conroy seemed to vacillate between being absolutely full of himself to being completely self-degrading. That got on my nerves. Which was it? Likely, it was somewhere in between and he should have just stayed there in his narration.

"Oh I sucked so much at basketball. Oh I got the basketball MVP. Oh I was such a mediocre player. Oh I took them to the hoop and scored 25 points..."

I think he should have decided on his self worth (and identity) before taking us along for a ride that wasn't always easy to get through.

A dear friend recommended this to me as one of her all time favorite books. This is the last book my father read before he died and he loved it (probably because of said friend's recommendation). As for me, I'm just happy it's over. Pat Conroy's prose is quite nice and I'm curious to see whether another book would have more to offer, but I do not recommend this one to anyone who doesn't love basketball. If you do love basketball, you'll probably enjoy it for that alone if you can stomach Conroy's simultaneous cockiness and whining.

Kathleen says

I enjoyed listening to the audio version of *MY LOSING SEASON: A MEMOIR* by Pat Conroy. He loved the game of basketball; the basketball court was an escape from the reality of his domineering father. Pat Conroy describes several games - play by play, and there is a lot of name-dropping. Basketball is not all rosy. One could say this book is an analogy to life.
4 stars

?Karen says

When Pat Conroy made his escape from an abusive ass of a father to play the game he loved, basketball, at The Citadel, he had no idea the abuse would continue in the form of (a.) his fellow classmates during Hell Night and then his entire plebe year, and (b.) his coach, who thrived on shaming his players in one way or another until they either collapsed in on their emotions or put on an "I'll show him" performance when next out on the court. Torn between his two loves, for the game and for developing himself as a writer, Conroy recalls his sad childhood and his time spent on the bball court up to his senior "losing season." His aim was to see if more is gained from losing than from winning. For us readers, I'm so glad that the turning of a phrase finally beat out the spinning of the basketball as his ultimate destination.

Even so, the prologue reveals that the writing and rehashing of his past was not so easy on him either:

"I have a history of cracking up at least once during the writing of each of my last five books. It has not provided the greatest incentive to head for the writing table each morning, but it's the reality I live with."

What a shame. Kind of makes you wonder what drove him to continue on doing something that might break him. It seems that writing about all of the near breakdowns during his formative years, which should have been cathartic, instead caused a gloom to spread over him. His own words, according to Wikipedia.org:

"Conroy lived in Beaufort with wife Cassandra [King] until his death. In 2007, he commented that she was a much happier writer than he was: 'I'll hear her cackle with laughter at some funny line she's written. I've never cackled with laughter at a single line I've ever written. None of it has given me pleasure. She writes with pleasure and joy, and I sit there in gloom and darkness.'"

Wonderful writing with deep introspection and raw honesty. Be warned, though, there is a lot of bball playing (the stories are wonderful, funny, sad and some long-winded) and a cast of characters to rival a phone book. Interspersed is self-doubt at every turn, a man so humble he felt any awards or accolades he won were undeserved, and not a dishonest bone in his body. A real Southern gentleman.
RIP Pat Conroy.

Linda Hart says

If you *love* basketball you will love this recounting of Conroy's senior season as a member of the Citadel basketball team. A touching meditation on loss and pain, Conroy's diction in this work is masterful; If, as I, you are merely a Conroy fan, you will enjoy learning more of who and what shaped this writer. In writing about basketball, Conroy finds a vessel to chew, interpret, and shape so much of his past, and out of it life's meaning.

“There is no teacher more discriminating or transforming than loss.”

“I had declared in public my desire to be a writer ... I wanted to develop a curiosity that was oceanic and insatiable as well as a desire to learn and use every word in the English language that didn't sound pretentious or ditzzy.”

“Good coaching is good teaching and nothing else.”

“An author must gorge himself on ten thousand images to select the magical one that can define a piece of the world in a way one has never considered before.”

“The words “I love you” could contain all the bloodthirsty despair of the abattoir, all the hopelessness of the most isolated, frozen gulag, all the lurid sadness of death row.”
