



Bleachers

John Grisham

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High school All-American Neely Crenshaw was probably the best quarterback ever to play for the legendary Messina Spartans. Fifteen years have gone by since those glory days, and Neely has come home to Messina to bury Coach Eddie Rake, the man who molded the Spartans into an unbeatable football dynasty.

As Coach Rake's 'boys' sit in the bleachers waiting for the dimming field lights to signal his passing, they replay the old glories, and try to decide once and for all whether they love Eddie Rake – or hate him. For Neely Crenshaw, still struggling to come to terms with his explosive relationship with the Coach, his dreams of a great career in the NFL, and the choices he made as a young man, the stakes could not be higher.

Bleachers Details

Date : Published September 9th 2003 by Doubleday Books (first published 2003)

ISBN : 9780385511612

Author : John Grisham

Format : Hardcover 163 pages

Genre : Fiction, Sports and Games, Sports, Football

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From Reader Review Bleachers for online ebook

Laura Green says

What a great story and quick read. Literally read this short novel in a day. Personally this made me rethink my high school days and all the positive coaches I've had in my life.

Yes vigils/funerals are sad they also are a time for those to get together as one and be reunited to relive some of the greatest moments from the past. This football team came together to honor their football coach who passes away.

Great recommendation for sport lovers.

Natalie Vellacott says

"When you're famous at eighteen, you spend the rest of your life fading away. You dream of the glory days, but you know they're gone forever."

This makes for an interesting change of pace and style for Grisham. It proves that he can write outside his usual genre and just about get away with it.

Bleachers is a nostalgic tale of dreams lost and memories swirling. The town of Messina is in mourning. Their feared yet beloved football coach Eddie Rake is on his death bed. As his condition deteriorates, players old and new drift back into town to pay their respects to their teacher, mentor and friend whom they loved and hated in equal measure. They gather at the bleachers to reminisce. The legacy of this man reverberates even as he takes his last breath.

I'm not interested in football and almost discarded this at the halfway point. The book is divided into long chapters which represent the days leading up to the death of the coach. The entire middle section is a blow by blow account of a past football game including commentary. However, I'm glad I picked it back up because it was after the game that it started to get interesting. I also feared the reaction of one of my Goodreads friends if I failed to finish it as he commented that it was his favourite Grisham book!

Grisham has managed to create a cast of characters, and develop them so effectively, that they represent both the importance of football to a local community whilst simultaneously destroying it as a complete waste of time and energy, unimportant in the big scheme of life. I'm not sure how he has done this, or why, as I believe he is a football fan.

The story is summed up in these few words spoken by a former player:

"Come back in a few years and they will not know your name. Your fabulous career will be a footnote. All the cute little girls will be mothers. The green jacket will still be a source of great personal pride, but you won't be able to wear it. High school stuff. Kids' stuff. Why was it so important back then?"

As a Christian, these words resonate with me. I often look at the things people obsess about, especially sport, and wonder why. I think about what they will be left with when it gets dull, or when the thing they love is

removed, or they are no longer able to worship it in the same way. I fear for them if this idol is all they have when they die and meet God.

Then I remember that I was like that too. I actually was a massive football supporter in my teens and obsessive about every game. The entire mood of our household was determined by whether my team won or lost. As I grew older, I fixated on other things. Whatever it was, it didn't ultimately fill the void in my heart and I was always dissatisfied and looking for the next thing worthy of my time and attention. It was only when I realised that my greatest need was God and that He was the only Person I should be worshiping that my life changed.

Grisham has somehow hit the nail on the head with this short novel by emphasising the fleetingness of earthly glory and fame. The sadness that is left as the years go by is presented as something worth revisiting. Unfortunately, he doesn't offer any solutions for joy and hope in the future once these things have passed away and all that is left is the memories. I am blessed that I have the answer in Jesus who offers hope not only for this life but for eternity!

This is worth reading, if I was a current football fan I would rate it higher...

Check out my John Grisham Shelf!

Sumit RK says

A High school football star comes back to his hometown to bid farewell to his dying coach. The book is about group of friends reminiscing the glory days of playing together and their relationship with their coach.

Word of caution : The book is centered around American football and their recollections of their memorable games (incl a long play by play commentary of 1 particular game). So if you have no idea about the game, you will find it annoying after a point.

Sadly, the relationship between the coach and the players and the players themselves is never fully explored and the emotional ending at the end feels totally flat. Overall 2/5

Brad Carl says

I've had this book for a long time, probably since it was released in 2003. I knew it was about football and didn't expect it to be fast-paced or action-packed. It's not a John Grisham thriller, for sure. Overall, it's a nice story. Kind of dark, maybe a bit anticlimactic. But at the same time, it has a nice message that anybody who has ever played youth sports should be able to understand.

Lynda says

Couldn't put it down. And it makes you think about how people influence you and how strong a bond is between coaches and players. This was excellent.

Amanda Patterson says

It must be boring to have to churn out a novel a year just because you're a best-selling author. This ennui can be the only excuse for Grisham's latest folly, *Bleachers*.

What a let-down when a crime novelist who once ruled a genre turns his hand to something more literary. "An unforgettable novel," drools the inside of the book's jacket, which was strange as I managed to forget it immediately. I had to drag the book off the shelf to remember the main character's name.

Neely Crenshaw comes home for the burial of his school football coach, Eddie Rake. This coach was extraordinary. All of his boys remember him and the impact he made on their lives as they sit in the bleachers waiting for the stadium's lights to dim and signal his passing.

Things have changed in his hometown of Messina. When he was a boy, there wasn't a place to buy an espresso. Now, everything's available and memories blur with real time.

Maybe this will appeal to American football fans but I got tired of hearing of the trials of Nate and Paul and Jesse. And I nearly lost it when Coach Rakes's funeral lasted for almost 40 pages.

I studied the blurb again, "this novel...is about the many ways boys become men." Really? Hmmm. Maybe you have to be a man to get it because it left me cold. His writing is competent but his characters lack depth. The plot was missing too, but maybe it was supposed to be. Who knows? Who cares?

I think this is one of the worst pieces of post 9/11 nonsense I've read. What a pity that a fine suspense author had to put all of his fans through this horrible ordeal.

Charity says

Holy majoly! I was so glad this book was short! It was lame-o.

Imagine the movie *Varsity Blues*, then add about 15 years with the full cast of characters coming back to town because the death of the former coach is imminent. That is the plot summary in a nutshell.

Cheeesy.

Christina says

I read this on the flight to Austin two weeks ago. Totally up my alley since it is about an iconic high school football coach and the impact he had on multiple generations of players. The former players gather in the bleachers at the school awaiting the death of the old coach as he succumbs to cancer. They slowly open up to each other sharing stories of the coach, not always glowing ones and in the memories of these players, the character of a dying man comes to life. It's an easy read as Grisham usually is, but also as is typical of his writing, there are some unexpected twists and excellent development of the characters.

Diane says

Sporty read! enjoyable, heartwarming, well developed characters with good storytelling..recommend (paperback!)

Kevin says

Fifteen years after swearing he would never return, Neely Crenshaw finds himself back in Messina, Texas, awaiting final word that local legend and former football coach Eddie Rake has died. When he left, Neely had become a local legend as one of the best quarterbacks in Messina High's history, but a falling out between him and the coach left him bitter and kept him away until this moment. Now, he finds himself dredging up the specters of the past with his former teammates as well as other former Rake players from other eras. This is a very painful novel to read having played high school football myself and I share many of the same feelings towards my old coach as Neely does — and as I'm sure many other former athletes do — despite the fact that I was not a star, hell I wasn't even a first stringer. In all honesty, this feels like a novelized version of what a sequel to the movie Varsity Blues would be. It's easy to tell that this story is very close to Grisham's heart and that he took the writing of this book very seriously as there are no cheesy subplots or alternate storylines to detract from the main story at hand. My only complaint was that this book was far too short. Clocking in at a mere 163 pages, this novel can be cranked out in one sitting and I felt that more could have been developed upon.

Lois says

I do own Grisham books, but only because family members keep buying them for me on birthday's and xmas's. I smile politely and thank them, wishing they would include the receipt. I have read this, and i don't recommend it unless you are 10 years old and want to start reading adult fiction. Dull, dull, dull. How this man is a best-selling writer is reflection of today's society's IQ.

Dele Haynes says

Bleachers By John Grisham (Fiction - Novella)

Former high school football players return to their home town to wait for the death of their former football coach, Eddie Rake. Rake was hard on his players, bordering on sadist, but he shaped his teams into state champions who established records that still stand in their state of Mississippi.

Neeley Crenshaw was one of those boys who came to reminisce. There are days that he hates the coach and days where he loves and respects Coach Rake. There's a lot of bad blood between them and Neeley's not sure if he can find it in himself to forgive the coach.

Bleachers takes place in a small southern town. Like most there isn't much going on except the only entertainment in town, the Friday night football games. Their lives revolve around the team. It's not unlike

many small towns where the players never grow passed their glory days. Yet, many of these players went on to be more in their lives. Maybe the coach had something to do with that.

Bleachers is one of those rare Grisham novels that isn't a lawyer book. I find that some can be boring because they fit into a formula. I believe Grisham reveals more of himself in these novels.

Eddie Owens says

This is a novella or a short story, not a novel.

When you're a best selling novelist you can get anything published.

This is a homage to those American high school coaches who inspired their teams. Nothing new or interesting here.

Listen to "Glory Days" by Springsteen and he says more on this subject in three minutes than Grisham does in 180 pages.

Belmin Zvekic says

The book "Bleachers" was a wonderful book to show you the positive and negatives of life when high school football is the main point. It also has a wonderful picture of what happens when you let an accident control your life. The coach showed me that there are people that you will consistently think about even with a bad situation. Everyone in life needs a person to help them with pushing yourself to get better more than we would push ourselves. If you decide to check out this book, you'll find the person who is your motivation. A weakness in this book is that there isn't really a situation in where something really exciting happens, most of it is sad. I would recommend this book to a classmate because it focuses on the outlook of life and everything that can occur. If this book was part of a series, I would continue to read it because its very interesting on how it is set up with everything happening very quickly. I would like to see how the team and everyone around would handle the whole situation.

Jane Stewart says

It was not fun. Guys who played high school football 15 yrs ago reminisce about the past. Melancholy and sadness.

STORY BRIEF:

Eddie Rake was a tough, mean, high school football coach with undefeated teams for many years. He now has cancer and is expected to die any day. Guys who used to play football for him have returned to town for the coming funeral. Neely was a star quarterback in high school. His career was cut short due to a knee injury in college. Neely talks with other guys about the past.

REVIEWER'S OPINION:

This isn't the kind of storytelling I'm used to from Grisham. It's not as fun. Almost everything is being

“told” not shown. We listen to the guys reminisce and remember events from the past. It was interesting in a newspaper reporting kind of way. There is no excitement, suspense, or anticipation. I didn’t feel anything as I listened. I didn’t laugh or smile. At best it was ok. I felt the author may have been experimenting - trying a different style of writing.

Some of it was about brutality and violence in football. A lot of it was sad to see what happens to football players after they no longer play. I was sad for Neely at the losses in his life. His wrecked knee. He lost the only two women he ever loved. He broke up with one of them for a stupid reason, and he regrets it. He had no desire to study and better himself after his football career was over. He’s not happy. He’s resigned to life.

NARRATOR:

The author narrated his own book which was ok. It was interesting to hear his southern accent.

DATA:

Unabridged audiobook story length: 4 hrs and 22 mins. Swearing language: none that I recall. Sexual content: none. Setting: current day Messina, Mississippi. Book copyright: 2003. Genre: football fiction. Ending: sad, resigned, life goes on.
