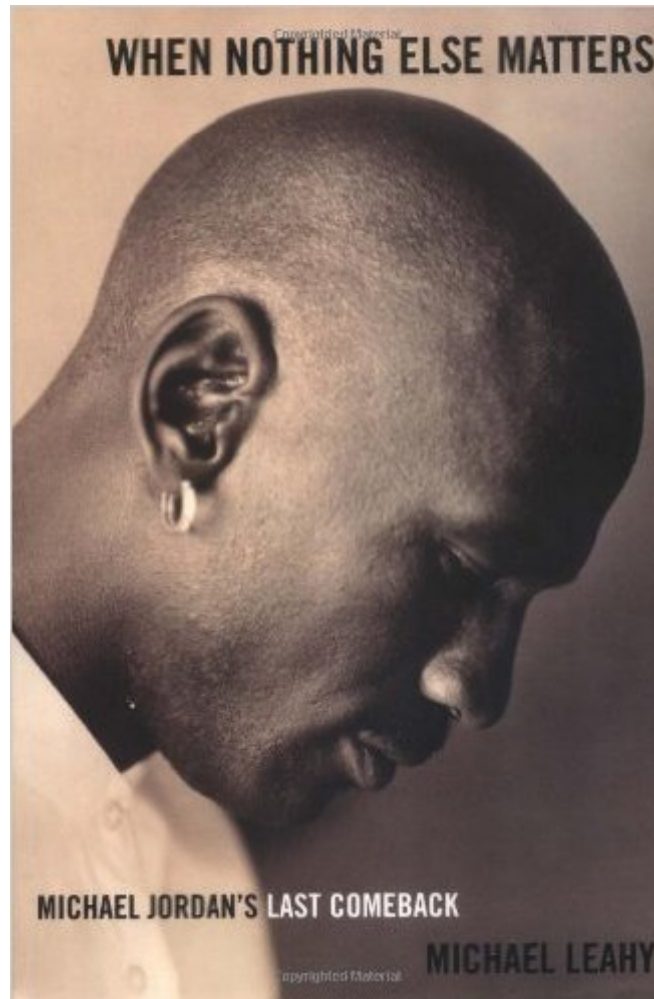


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When Nothing Else Matters: Michael Jordan's Last Comeback



Synopsis

As one of the greatest, most celebrated athletes in history, Michael Jordan conquered professional basketball as no one before. Powered by a potent mix of charisma, near superhuman abilities and a ferocious drive to dominate the game, he achieved every award and accolade conceivable before retiring from the Chicago Bulls and taking an executive post with the Washington Wizards. But retirement didn't suit the man who was once king, and at the advanced age of thirty-eight Michael Jordan decided it was time to reclaim the court that was once his. **WHEN NOTHING ELSE MATTERS** is the definitive account of Jordan's equally spectacular and disastrous return to basketball. Having closely followed Jordan's final two seasons, Michael Leahy draws a fascinating portrait of an intensely complex man hampered by injuries and assaulted by younger players eager to usurp his throne. In this enthralling book Jordan emerges as an ambitious, at times deeply unattractive character with, unsurprisingly, a monstrous ego. **WHEN NOTHING ELSE MATTERS** is an absorbing portrait not only of one athlete's overriding ambition, but also of a society so in thrall to its sports stars that it is blind to all their faults.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a groundbreaking book in many respects. I am an ardent NBA fan but have found it nearly impossible to find 'real' biographies on the real goings-on in NBA locker rooms. I believe most sportswriters are either afraid to anger their sources (many examples of that in this book) or lack the journalistic know how to do in-depth reporting. I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It paints a detailed picture of an NBA locker room and the dysfunctionalities that go on. I came away with a very clear

picture of Jordan as a sad figure in a sense who is self-absorbed, immature and really has little understanding of life beyond the small and plastic world he inhabits. I actually felt somewhat sorry for him by the end of the book. The portrait came as no surprise given the surreal environment and idolic treatment these athletes (who in the big picture put a ball through a hoop for a living though God bless em for it) receive at a very early age. You can't really blame Jordan as he is a product of his stilted environment. On the other hand, it makes those ads and "Be Like Mike" endorsements ring hollow and ironic. The book is also an interesting study on how fans need athletes to validate themselves. From the Wizards minority owner who basically buys Jordan's acquaintance for a piece of his stake in the franchise to the reporters who feel privileged to ask Jordan a 'staged' question even if they aren't doing any real reporting. To the Wizards (Collins) coach who is so enamored of Jordan that he is afraid to make a move without his approval to the detriment of the team. This is a book for true NBA or Jordan followers or those interested in the distorted relationship between pro athletes and their fans. I have a lot of respect for this author for daring to accurately report a man-God.

I am glad to see this book has already generated a good deal of buzz and reviews. I lived in the DC area during the "Jordan Era" both his management of and play for, the Wizards, and I must say (and perhaps I am biased) that this book is a mostly accurate reflection of what many of us suspected about MJ when he came to town. To wit: (1) He had little/no respect for owner Abe Pollin; (2) He installed flunkies in senior management positions, ostensibly to do the scouting, negotiating, etc he apparently was uninterested in doing; (3) His "return" was one part attempt to restore "buzz" around his name and brand and a second part an attempt to whitewash/hide his shortcomings as an executive by pulling the team to near .500; (4) As soon as he retired, Pollin shivved him and showed him the door. In short, there are no "winners" or "good guys" in this story, indeed, everyone comes out looking badly. Jordan is portrayed as a distant, arrogant, demeaning teammate who put his own self interest ahead of his team, even as he was holding the Coach's puppet strings and using the media to communicate not-so-thinly veiled threats at the very people he signed/drafted. Pollin comes across as a money-hungry owner who used Jordan to sell tickets and then tossed him overboard roughly 3.5 seconds after his final game. Ultimately, the relationship was one where both parties were USING the other, there was no trust, no sense of team, no sense of "we're all in this together", so why should be be surprised it blew up so quickly. Leahy has received some heat in other reviews for injecting bias and/or reflecting his own opinion, but hey, THAT'S HIS JOB. He's providing an angle, an opinion, it's his book.

Published in 2004, author Michael Leahy shares his experiences during Michael Jordan's last comeback to the National Basketball Association. Leahy's portrayal of Jordan showed a different side of the basketball legend which is not normally seen in the eyes of the public. Jordan, the "the most marketed player in the history of the NBA," was finally... "mortal" and did go through the same trials and tribulations (from a heightened perspective) that we all go through at some point in our lives. Leahy accounts the days wherein Jordan was at his best and would score 35 points over the span of several games to the days wherein he wasn't unstoppable and hit his career lows of 8 and 2 points respectively. What stood out for me was Jordan's lambasting of players who didn't play up to his standards. Leahy quotes Jordan on numerous occasions wherein he would lambast teammates. Coach Fred "Tex" Winter, an assistant with the Los Angeles Lakers and former assistant coach with the Chicago Bulls summed it up best, "you either work hard or Michael has no use for you." But the one paragraph in Leahy's entire book which rocked my very foundation of emulating Michael Jordan was the following: "His people had held him up as a man to be emulated, making Jordan more than a half-billion in endorsement dollars in the process... he had raised the bar on his behavior during 17 years of unremitting self-promotion, in campaigns approved by the Jordan camp and coordinated by Nike and other corporate sponsors that elevated him from great athlete to hero and, finally, to moral symbol.... when you present yourself as virtuous in years of ad campaigns and TV commercials, you will be fairly held in time to that standard.

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