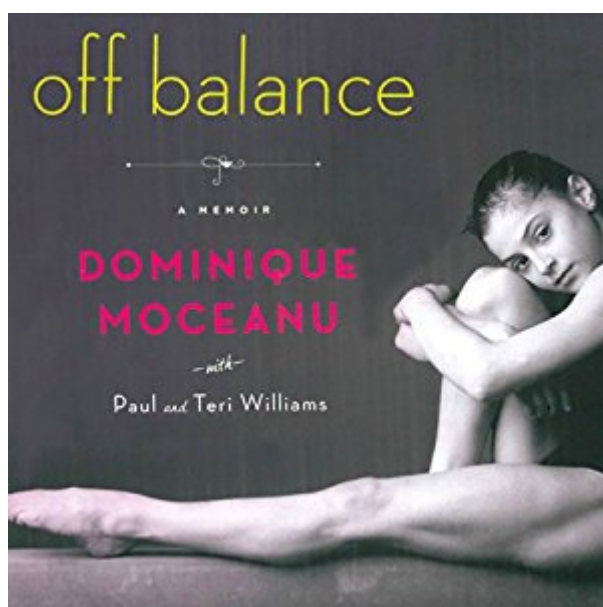


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Off Balance: A Memoir



Synopsis

In this searing and riveting New York Times best seller, Olympic gold medalist Dominique Moceanu reveals the dark underbelly of Olympic gymnastics, the true price of success...and the shocking secret about her past and her family that she only learned years later. At 14 years old, Dominique Moceanu was the youngest member of the 1996 US Women's Olympic Gymnastics team, the first and only American women's team to take gold at the Olympics. Her pixyish appearance and ferocious competitive drive quickly earned her the status of media darling. But behind the fame, the flawless floor routines, and the million-dollar smile, her life was a series of challenges and hardships. *Off Balance* vividly delineates each of the dominating characters who contributed to Moceanu's rise to the top, from her stubborn father and long-suffering mother to her mercurial coach, Bela Karolyi. Here, Moceanu finally shares the haunting stories of competition, her years of hiding injuries and pain out of fear of retribution from her coaches, and how she hit rock bottom after a public battle with her parents. But medals, murder plots, drugs, and daring escapes aside (all of which figure into Moceanu's incredible journey), the most unique aspect of her life is the family secret that Moceanu discovers, opening a new and unexpected chapter in her adult life. A mysterious letter from a stranger reveals that she has a second sister - born with a physical disability and given away at birth - who has nonetheless followed in Moceanu's footsteps in an astonishing way. A multilayered memoir that transcends the world of sports, *Off Balance* will touch anyone who has ever dared to dream of a better life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A memoir is the story of a person's life and their experiences and no one should be entitled to review that. Accordingly, this review focuses only on how the information is presented and whether the audience of potential buyers would take an interest in it. As fans of celebrities we pick up on a person during or after their major achievements. In the case of Moceanu (for most) this would be 1996 when she and the U.S. Woman's team won a gold medal in the team competition for gymnastics. She was just 14 years old. I assumed it took a lot of hard work to get there, and that the path was not easy. I also assumed that it was a childhood lost and replaced with the hard work and determination of an adult. This book certainly confirms these theories. I feel I can write this without it being a real spoiler for anyone. We (the public) see the glorious results and have some appreciation for how difficult it is to achieve the results, but no true understanding. This memoir humanizes Moceanu's achievements and it does it in an incredibly well thought out and touching way. For example, most fans knew her family was Romanian - but probably few considered what that truly meant. It meant that Moceanu is a first generation American who came from a poor family of immigrants... a family which had a financially unsteady situation. It may be hard enough to achieve greatness, but it is even harder living in a two-bedroom apartment with your parents, sister and grandparents. Most great gymnasts tend to be on the small side, but have any fans considered what it is like to be the smallest person in your class selected last to play a sport in gym class, have a funny sounding name and come to school with food that is unlike your classmates' food at lunch time?

I've been a fan of Dominique's for as long as I can remember. Living in Brazil, it wasn't always easy to follow her career in a time when we didn't have youtube, facebook or twitter... I grew up watching her perform in the world's most prestigious competitions, and ultimately watched her become an Olympic Champion in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. What I loved most about her was that big, beautiful smile she flashed to the audience and the cameras whenever she was performing that just made everything look so easy and effortless! I guess that's why America and the world fell in love with her. But little did we know that behind all that, there was a terrified little girl who was being physically, emotionally and mentally abused and humiliated by the very people who were supposed to love, care and protect her. This book does a great job in telling the whole story from Dominique's point of view maybe for the first time ever. She's blunt honest, straight forward in telling the story of her own life, and for the first time we can really understand where she's coming from and what was happening in her life before, during and after Atlanta. The family feud, the loss of all her money, her

escape from home at the age of seventeen, the freedom, the parties, the drugs and all the injuries that ultimately took their toll on her and forced her to retire prematurely. Not to mention her secret sister! But one of the most interesting issues mentioned by her is the politics behind the US Women's Gymnastics program and how ugly and unfair it can be. I was shocked to hear about her life with the Karolyis, especially because, like many others, I believed the show they put on for the cameras!

I very rarely read biographies. In fact I can think of only one other one I've read (that wasn't a school assignment). I love watching gymnastics and saw this book so I got a sample sent to my Kindle. One person's review said they weren't sure of why she started with the chapter about her sister. I personally think it was a brilliant move. It draws you in and laid the ground work for describing who her parents were as people in the next chapter. I was appalled by many of the things mentioned in the book about the world of gymnastics but I can't say that I'm surprised. Another review I read on here alluded that "official" book reviews/media sources were stating that "she can't back it up" or that "she was bitter." To this I would say that I remember hearing mumblings (I think it was after the 96 Olympics) about how "not nice" Bela Karolyi was. I think that because it is shocking and appalling because people don't WANT to believe it. People most likely think that: Surely in this day and age this couldn't be taking place in a place like the US. For me it doesn't take a stretch of the imagination to believe. When I was telling my mother about the book her first comment was: "Sounds very European to me." (Meaning reminiscent of the Soviet Union methods in years past). To illustrate I have two words: Elena Mukhina. A Soviet Woman gymnast that was pushed to do a tumbling pass that was beyond her capabilities and strength, as well as beyond her comfort. The result was that she broke her neck. Granted, she was a Soviet Woman and the Karolyis are Romanian but both places were communists countries at their height and, as such, had very similar views on their athletes.

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