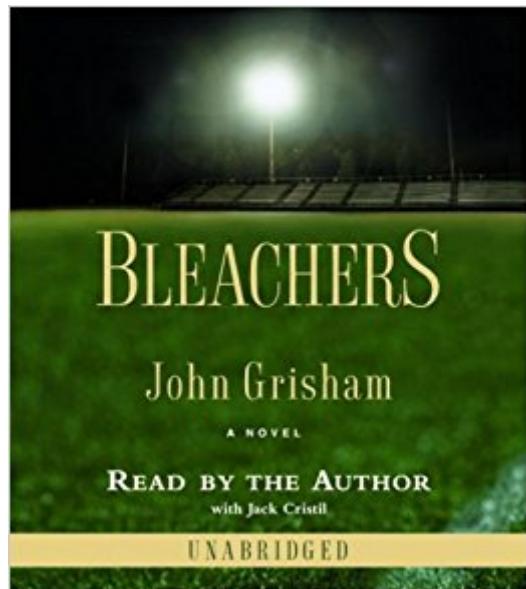


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# Bleachers



## Synopsis

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. Now, as Coach Rakeâ€¢s Ã¢“boysÃ¢ sit in the bleachers waiting for the dimming field lights to signal his passing, they replay the old games, relive the old glories, and try to decide once and for all whether they love Eddie Rake Ã¢ or hate him. For Neely Crenshaw, a man who must finally forgive his coach Ã¢ and himself Ã¢ before he can get on with his life, the stakes are especially high.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

With *Bleachers* John Grisham departs again from the legal thriller to experiment with a character-driven tale of reunion, broken high school dreams, and missed chances. While the book falls short of the compelling storytelling that has made Grisham a bestselling author, it is nonetheless a diverting novella that succeeds as light fiction. The story centers on the impending death of the Messina Spartans' football coach Eddie Rake. One of the most victorious coaches in high school football history, Rake is a man both loved and feared by his players and by a town that relishes his 13 state titles. The hero of the novel is Neely Crenshaw, a former Rake All-American whose NFL prospects ended abruptly after a cheap shot to the knees. Neely has returned home for the first time in years to join a nightly vigil for Rake at the Messina stadium. Having wandered through life with little focus since his college days, he struggles to reconcile his conflicted feelings

towards his former coach, and he assays to rekindle love in the ex-girlfriend he abandoned long ago. For Messina and for Neely, the homecoming offers the prospect of building a life after Rake. Physically a narrow book, Bleachers is a modest fiction in many respects. The emotional scope is akin to that of a short story, with a single-minded focus on explorations of nostalgia and regret. The dialogue, especially that of Neely's friend Paul Curry, is sometimes wooden as characters recall Messina history in paragraphs that were perhaps better left to the narrator. But Grisham has otherwise written a well-made, entertaining--if a bit sentimental--story. --Patrick O'Kelley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As this poignant story begins, famed high school football coach Eddie Rake, who was known for producing one extraordinary team after another until he was fired, lays dying. Still, he remains a legend in Messina, a small town that comes together every week "to pour their emotions upon a Friday night football team." Indeed, in this town the football field is "more sacred than a cemetery." Neely Crenshaw, perhaps the best quarterback ever to play for Coach Rake, had vowed he'd never come back to Messina while Rake was alive. Yet he returns to share a vigil with the team members he left behind 15 years ago. Slowly, the narrative reveals why Rake was fired so suddenly and what happened between him and Neely. Along the way, the players reminisce and look hard at who they have become. This is a story of men's loyalty, their toughness and their clumsy affection for each other. Grisham's voice calls to mind that of Martin Sheen; he reads quietly and doesn't modulate his voice as the various team members tell their stories. He doesn't need to. His understated, stellar performance outshines the book's cloying story line. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

For those of us who were athletes "back in the day," and our "crowning athletic achievements may have been by the time we were 17/18 years old, I found the author's reminiscences right on target!! The love/hate relationship with the coach(es), the pain of summer workouts, the thrill of winning the games, and the pain of losing, too. Yet, we all grow up. We all grow old. What happened 25 years ago (in this case, in my case more like 45) doesn't really much matter now. What's important is the relationships we had then, and still have, and our newer relationships. The pain of "lost/unfulfilled dreams" and growing up to see what life is really like. And then, your coach, your mentor, the man who taught you about winning, losing, effort, not EVER quitting, desire, and hard work dies. Not unexpectedly, but yet, he dies. and all those floods of emotions return. The heat, the very little water, the winning, and the pain of that last loss...that 25 years later, still remains in your head. I

laughed. I cried. I remembered. I reevaluated all of it, as the author does in the book, and yes, I felt every hurt like it was this week...not 45 years ago!! I loved it.

You don't have to be a sports fan to enjoy this book. This books about life, growing old, and thinking about what is important in our lives. A thoughtful and nostalgic John Grisham continues to be a great story teller. We see the story through the eyes of Neely Crenshaw, an All-American quarterback, who was brought back to his old town by the death of his coach Eddie Rake. Through his eyes we relive the highs and lows of Eddie Rake's life. We learn that even great people can make mistakes, we learn how to forgive, and how to ask for forgiveness. It is the kind of story that touches you and makes you feel good after you finished it.

It was interesting to get inside the heads of these aging ball players. I guess the optimist in me wanted more to the end of the story. Still a good book that I am glad I took the time to read.

Coming from a similar, small town powerhouse (albeit East Coast) with a "mercurial" and hot tempered coach this was a great read. Same brutal one-on-one tackling drills, summer practices sans water, and wind sprints at the end of grueling "two a days". While we did not have any All-Americans or anyone (spoiler alert) who died in practice (several died due to car accidents over the years) there were many characters and stories that remind me of the "glory days" - of which many in my little town - who never left - still try to relive every Friday night in the fall.

Grisham steps out onto the field and throws a touchdown. A solidly written book...sharply drawn characters...Grisham knows football. His main character, Neely Crenshaw, comes home to say good-bye to his coach and discovers more about his own character and his life choices and finally lets go of the past. A departure from most books since Grisham's protagonist is never directly part of the dialogue...The story is told in vivid flashbacks of games never-forgotten, memories never out of reach and lessons that are kept for a lifetime through Coach Eddie Rake's players. This book will be read in an afternoon and is a nice introduction to Grisham's books that don't have a courtroom involved in the main plot. (But never fear, there is a lawyer in this story, too.) :-)

I couldn't finish this. It was just boring. I found it completely different than his usual great writing, and it couldn't hold my interest.

The great high school athlete trying to reconcile with his success and the cost of that success. Very enlightening and a great read as usual.

This book was recommended to me because of the introspection and personal revelations in the wake of the coach's impending death. I think that most people over 50 will be able to relate to the memories, the mistakes, and the regrets referenced in this book. The characters are more flat than usual for a Grisham novel and lack the detailed development I associate with the author. This quality makes the difference between a penetrating tale and an interesting narrative.

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