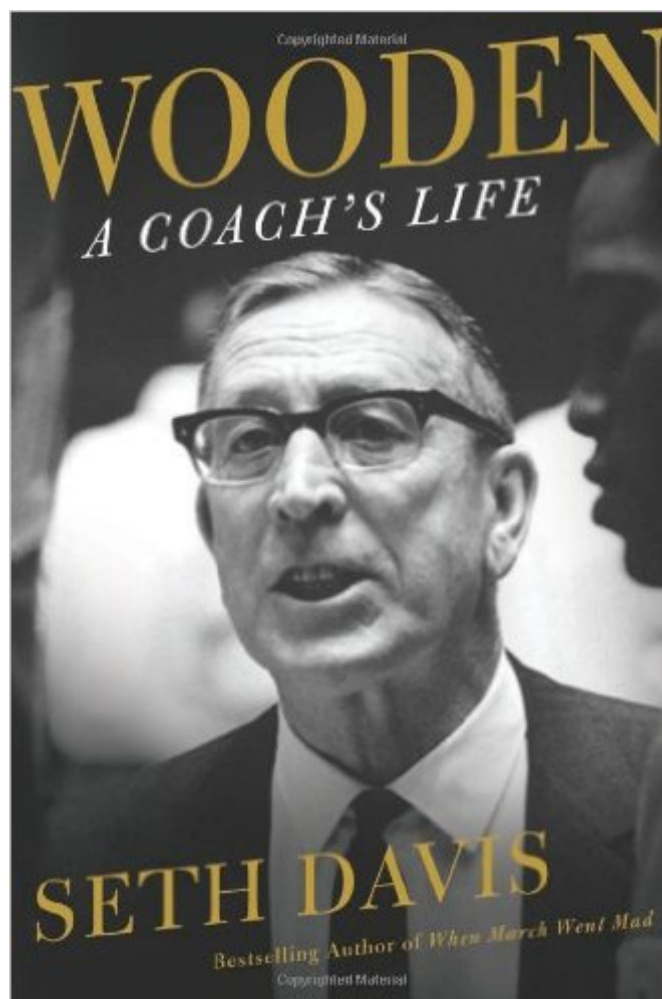


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Wooden: A Coach's Life



Synopsis

A provocative and revelatory new biography of the legendary UCLA coach John Wooden, by one of America's top college basketball writers. No college basketball coach has ever dominated the sport like John Wooden. His UCLA teams reached unprecedented heights in the 1960s and '70s capped by a run of ten NCAA championships in twelve seasons and an eighty-eight-game winning streak, records that stand to this day. Wooden also became a renowned motivational speaker and writer, revered for his "Pyramid of Success." Seth Davis of Sports Illustrated and CBS Sports has written the definitive biography of Wooden, an unflinching portrait that draws on archival research and more than two hundred interviews with players, opponents, coaches, and even Wooden himself. Davis shows how hard Wooden strove for success, from his All-American playing days at Purdue through his early years as a high school and college coach to the glory days at UCLA, only to discover that reaching new heights brought new burdens and frustrations. Davis also reveals how at the pinnacle of his career Wooden found himself on questionable ground with alumni, referees, assistants, and even some of his players. His was a life not only of lessons taught, but also of lessons learned. Woven into the story as well are the players who powered Wooden's championship teams — Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Bill Walton, Walt Hazzard, and others — many of whom speak frankly about their coach. The portrait that emerges from Davis's remarkable biography is of a man in full, whose life story still resonates today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Title: Wooden: A Coach's Life Author: Seth Davis Publisher: Henry Hold and Company / Times

Books ISBN: 978-0-8050-9280-6 He was, in short, a hard-to-please, detail-obsessed, hyper-organized taskmaster and control freak which made it all the more jarring when he adopted a hands-off approach during games. Seth Davis writes in his book about John Wooden, "Wooden: A Coach's Life." At six hundred and eight pages, this biography based on the legendary UCLA basketball coach would be enjoyed by enthusiasts, educators, and historians of the sport. Divided into four annual seasons that cover thirty-five chapters, those who loved, played for, coached against, and resented him reminisce about the iconic figure. With some profanity (mostly quoted), included are eight pages of black and white photographs, his coaching record, over thirty pages of notes, acknowledgments, and a thorough index. Senior writer for Sports Illustrated, Davis spent more than four years compiling and gleaning public and personal information on the positive and negative side of Wooden, the "Wizard of Westwood" who led his team to ten NCAA titles and a record eighty-eight game winning streak beginning in the nineteen sixties. Starting from the determined, self-disciplined child raised by strict Christian parents on their sixty-acre Indiana farm, young Wooden wanted to be a civil engineer. Learning balance in life through a new sport called basket ball, he grew up during the Depression, played at Purdue, became a US Navy lieutenant, and incurred a back injury, changing his vocational path to teaching English at the high school level.

I admit to being one who is only compelled to write a review if I feel that a book is exceptional. As such, few books I read ever impel me to write a review (I would imagine that I am not alone with this tendency). I also am going to write this without having read one word of what someone else has written so to the extent that my views effectively (if not literally) repeat anybody else's already state opinions or observations it is completely inadvertent. I was motivated to read Seth Davis's book after reading an excerpt in Sports Illustrated before the book was released. The excerpt covered an era (the last part of Lew Alcindor's time at UCLA) in Wooden's career which seemed, on the surface, to be pretty vanilla and benign. To the extent that the piece described a material amount of underlying turmoil beneath that ostensibly calm surface more than piqued my interest, as I presume it did others. Still, I was fearful that the book would not have enough of these interesting (and little known) stories at the expense of a perfunctory regurgitation of the staples of the Wooden legend that the HBO Specials, Bill Walton color commentary and other examples have ingrained into our collective consciousness. Furthermore, I have read several post-career Wooden books (including one compiled by Steve Jamison titled "Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court"). To that end, the last thing I was interested in was some detailed breakdown of the

Pyramid of Success (which Davis barely refers to) or in the homespun aphorisms or homolies that Bill Walton has only reminded the television viewer of at least 10,000 times (the only one of those that I can remember Davis mentioning in any context is "Be Quick but Don't Hurry").

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