



When Nothing Else Matters: Michael Jordan's Last Comeback

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As one of the greatest, most celebrated athletes in history, Michael Jordan conquered professional basketball as no one had before.

As one of the greatest, most celebrated athletes in history, Michael Jordan conquered professional basketball as no one had before. Powered by a potent mix of charisma, nearly superhuman abilities, and a ferocious need to dominate the game, he won six NBA championships with the Chicago Bulls and captured every basketball award and accolade conceivable before retiring and taking a top 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 set out to reclaim the court that had been his dominion. *When Nothing Else Matters* is the definitive account of Jordan's equally spectacular and disastrous return to basketball.

Washington Post writer Michael Leahy reveals the striking contrast between the public Jordan and the man whose personal style alienated teammates and the Washington owner who ousted him.

When Nothing Else Matters: Michael Jordan's Last Comeback Details

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Bryan says

Interesting insights behind the scenes of the Wizards/NBA. But on the whole, not much of substance is revealed other than "Jordan has a big ego" and "Jordan didn't manage his tendinitis well and it ruined his comeback". Not much else carries weight. In fact, author comes across as holier-than-though when compared to his peers.

Leahy attempts to use book to expose the cozy relationship between media/athletes/teams as self-serving and corrupt. I agree this isn't so good. But after reading his book and comparing it to the story as I saw it 5 years ago, my conclusion is this: I don't care so much if the stories are through rose-colored glasses, tell half the story and lack hard-hitting journalism. It's sports.

Part of me is glad Leahy wasted 2 years of his life (essentially his words when relating his work to his family) just to have the satisfaction of feeling like he was a "real" journalist in an arena lacking them. Good for him.

John says

To most, Michael Jordan is the pinnacle of athletic success: a seemingly irreproachable basketball god whose name symbolizes greatness. Even so, Michael Leahy masterfully details this god's fall from his pedestal in his book *When Nothing Else Matters*. *While many will undoubtedly remember Jordan's reign in Chicago, one cannot forget that he played two more seasons after leaving the Bulls in 1999. Jordan's time in Washington D.C. tends to be forgotten or even intentionally ignored, especially by the most fanatical fans. Nevertheless, Leahy is able to highlight both the successes and rifts during Jordan's decline.*

No fan of "His Airness" usually would ever willingly support someone that unveils Jordan's flaws in a book. That includes me, a die-hard Chicago Bulls fan. I can be extremely biased, answering the question of who the greatest of all time was without even thinking. Despite my favoritism, I appreciated Leahy's effort to sacrifice his relationship with Jordan in order to publish the truth. Jordan's scandals and especially his missed shots are described in painful detail. When Nothing Else Matters is the first book to get me genuinely depressed while reading. For example, Leahy will build up the tension during a clutch situation and have Jordan raise up for the game-winning shot, only to remind the reader of Jordan's old age by depicting an unknown player hanging in the air longer than even Michael Jordan and blocking his shot to the ground. These kinds of scenarios coupled with Jordan's constant knee injuries (which he attempted to play through but ultimately succumbed to atrophy on his aging body) hit me hard as a fan. I wanted Jordan to flourish even if he was at the age of 40, practically 80 years of age in basketball time, playing against the likes of Kobe Bryant and Tracy McGrady. Leahy's descriptions of Jordan getting abruptly knocked off from the top, even to Jordan haters, will be upsetting. I believe Leahy sums up the theme of his book quite well by describing Jordan's fall from grace as: "When he no longer could leap halfway up a backboard, people began struggling to remember what they worshipped about him [...] The resulting fall was long and hard" (Leahy p429). I would recommend any basketball fan to read this book, especially Jordan lovers. This book allows readers get a transparent glimpse into the life of an aging Jordan without the shield of reporters and accolades covering him.

Kevin says

Total hit job. The real subject of the book is Michael Leahy and his impressive ability to see through it all.

Drew says

For years, Michael Jordan could do no wrong. It was the golden age of advertising and he was the first perfect spokesman. The black hip-hop crowd loved his rags to riches story. White suburban kids wanted his moves, wanted to dunk with Jordan's mastery. He wasn't offensive, so he got votes of confidence from parents and CEOs as well. What Leahy's book shows is that Jordan didn't just stumble into stardom. He manages to establish dominance and power everywhere off the court, too. There are stories of his philandering, his cutting remarks at teammates, and his inability to accept when the sun has set on his career. This book is a fascinating window into aging, and how some men don't go gently.

RB Love says

So you read this book and you gather the very documented impressions that Michael Jordan is a mean dick, Doug Collins, (recently hired as head coach of the Philadelphia 76ers) is a spineless, emotional mess and that the author, Michael Leahy, is, or at least put himself in the position of, a creepy, sniping voyeur of sorts. Scathing. Revealing. And ultimately, so what? Jordan's career as a basketball player still out-beautifies any rotten, entitlement-type behavior he could subject the people around him to or executive shortcomings he may have.

Interesting history and notes on Washington Wizards owner, (recently deceased) Abe Pollin.

Interesting to go back in time in the NBA, even if it was just seven years ago, and read about how things were for a season or two and compare how things have changed.

Also, Leahy makes many interesting observations about sport and media and culture throughout.

"We romanticize the banal, and catalog the silly. We have churned out so many of these stories, competently, even artfully, that at some point long ago we succeeded in making the ridiculous relevant." p. 112.

John says

This was bittersweet for me. Nobody likes the humanization of an icon, and that's what "When Nothing Else Matters" truly is.

This is the new millenium "Jordan Rules" - a story of a misunderstood superstar who actually struggles with ego and age.

I've heard the stories time and again about Jordan's attitude towards his teammates, coaches, the media and PR people, etc. And it's about time to realize that while he was the greatest athlete in the era of sports marketing, a God to so many dreamers, he struggles with life, too.

Leahy (the author) writes for the Post and was banned from locker rooms for several seasons following this book's publishing.

For a Jordan fan, read it. For a sports fan, maybe give it a shot. Or don't.

Tedi31 says

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.

For more, visit: <http://www.hankpym.com>

Elke says

Leahy inserts himself way too often in this book and tries to distinguish himself from being part of the media that gave Mr. Jordan a free pass in not harassing him too much with their coverage. He does offer a compelling argument that MJ set the Wizards back with his management moves and his rushed comeback ignoring the advice of his trainers. I agree with another reader's review that compared this book to Sam Smith's Jordan Rules. MJ was a great b-ball player and was also a flawed man and as a fan, that makes me appreciate him even more. Definitely don't read this book if you want to keep the perfect idolized version of MJ in your mind.

Reilly Van says

This book pissed me off because it becomes apparent throughout that the author is trying to make Michael Jordan look like an asshole just b/c he wouldn't grant this author the access he wanted.

Courtney Skelton says

"Michael Leahy tells us a compelling yet sad story about the greatest basketball player of all time trying desperately to hang on to his place on the court as well as his place in the limelight. It was just too bad that by time he signed with Washington he had nothing left. Turns out our Michael Jordan is human after all."

Ben McKeown says

ery interesting, narrative-driven account of MJ's final comeback with the Wizards. I grew somewhat weary, however, of Leahy's apparent disdain for Jordan, especially in his dealings with the media. Much of the tone of the book is very negative and condemning. As a member of the sports media, I can understand the sort of tension that builds between athletes and the press, however there is a mental barrier that must be surpassed in order to truly appreciate the unique nature of covering sports. Leahy seems to hold a grudge against Jordan,

which informs much of his commentary about the comeback and sometimes makes for paragraphs of rants about the nature of sports media in general. A journalist cannot paint an entirely accurate portrait of a person or a situation when such a grudge is held.

All in all, I enjoyed the stories in the book. Even as a life-long admirer of Michael Jordan, I enjoyed the lesser-known and somewhat unflattering anecdotes about the man. I do believe though that the portrait could have been better depicted if Leahy had removed himself from the situation a bit more.

Kevin says

In a similar context to the popular book 'The Jordan Rules' and 'Playing for Keeps', When Nothing Else Matters details Michael Jordan's forgettable four year career stint with the Washington Wizards. Both in a front office and player stand point, the book exposes Jordan and peels back the curtain from what the public perceived as this basketball god.

Never did Jordan struggle more in his career than his years with the Wizards, partly due to age and injury, but also partly due to his inability to connect and develop a chemistry and overall comradery with teammates and front office personnel, specifically owner Abe Pollin. All this led to an unpleasant departure from the Wizards organization, which Michael Leahy describes in his book.

Rachel Smith says

Michael Leahy's purpose for writing "When Nothing Else Matters" was to show everyone what the NBA was really like, and what the athletes really had to say. Not a lot of sports writers would have been willing to write a book like this. Most would be afraid to anger the person they interview, by putting words in their mouth or exposing them in some way. I feel like the point of view was really coming from the inside of the league. His style, to me, was very informing, but witty at the same time. The audience would be basketball or NBA fans.

The theme of the book would be truth. With all the media and press coverage about everything that happens in the NBA, nobody can really ever know the truth about what is going on. The author was trying to say or show all of what really went on during the "Jordan Era". He wanted to show everyone the real personalities of these people.

The style the book was written in was an exposition. He explained what truly happens in the NBA, and brought clarity to the subject. I think that the style was effective. It really worked with what he was trying to say. If he would've made it a story, I do not think it would have been as effective because this way was very clear.

I loved the book. I liked it so much, because I am a huge basketball and NBA fan. But I also liked that I got to find out what really goes on and not just what you hear on the tv. The only thing I disliked about it was that at some points, it lost my focus. If I changed something about it, I would have explained the situation more and everything that was going on, so that the book would appeal to a wider audience. It is not similar to any book I've read because I mostly read fiction.

Dave says

This book nearly made me cry. I didn't go into the book looking to have Jordan knocked off his perch, but I left that way. Leahy is involved heavily in this story, sometimes in a self-satisfied way, and sometimes as a cultural observer. It felt uneven, at times like a biography of Leahy covering Jordan and at times like a very long newspaper article.

Those weren't the crying parts. I nearly cried as Jordan tried to will his way back from injury and through the challenges of being 38-40 in a league filled with men 10 and 15 years his junior. He rushed it and made poor decisions, but the hardest part about this book is the failure of Jordan to come to terms with the end of his playing career. I was never a great Jordan admirer, but I came to have a grudging respect for his ability. This book examines heavily the flip-side of his unbelievable will to win and the damage it did to the only hometown NBA basketball team I've ever had, the Wizards.

GWC says

A decent narrative of Jordan's seasons with the Wizards, but cluttered with the standard sports myth-busting about "how we prefer our heroes" that gets in the way of the story.
