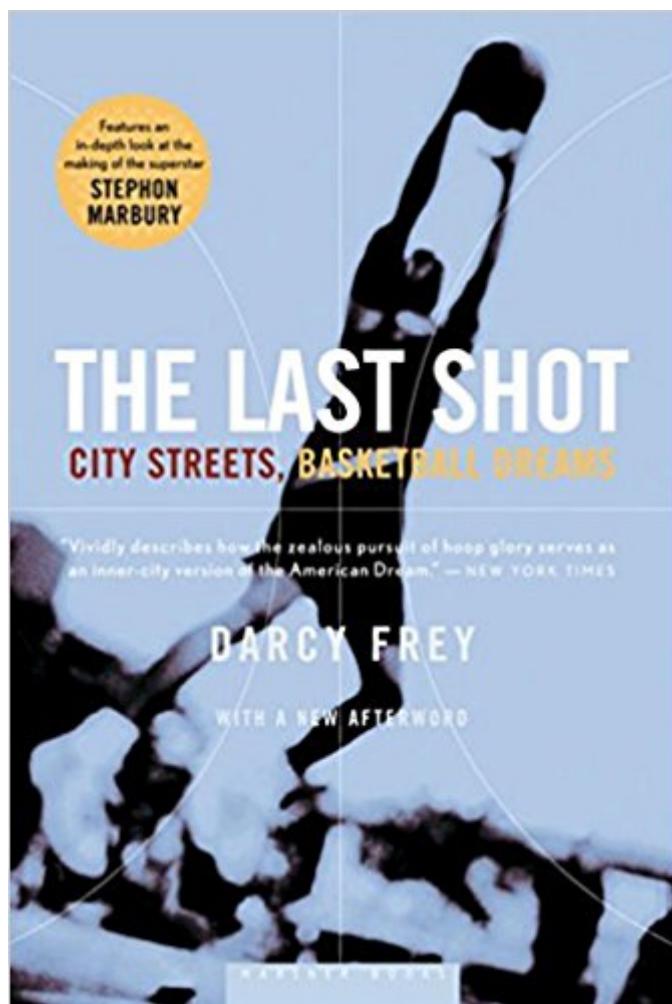


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The Last Shot: City Streets, Basketball Dreams



Synopsis

It ought to be just a game, but basketball on the playgrounds of Coney Island is much more than that. For many young men it represents their only hope of escape from a life of crime, poverty, and despair. In *The Last Shot*, Darcy Frey chronicles the aspirations of four of the neighborhood's most promising players. What they have going for them is athletic talent, grace, and years of dedication. But working against them are woefully inadequate schooling, family circumstances that are often desperate, and the slick, brutal world of college athletic recruitment. Incisively and compassionately written, *The Last Shot* introduces us to unforgettable characters and takes us into their world with an intimacy seldom seen in contemporary journalism. The result is a startling and poignant exposé of inner-city life and the big business of college basketball.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Coney Island, Brooklyn, once New York City's playground, is now an archetypal ghetto, filled with high-rise housing projects and populated almost exclusively by African Americans. High schoolers there attend Abraham Lincoln High, known all around the East Coast for its outstanding basketball teams, where players see the sport as their way out of second-class citizenship. In his first book, Frey, a contributing editor at Harper's and the New York Times Magazine, has composed a sensitive account of a year in the lives of four exceptional players (three seniors and one freshman), their coach and their families, and he shows that the game can indeed be a means of escape in spite of their school's poor academic reputation. But the way out is fraught with difficulties. For instance, Frey offers devastating anecdotes about dishonest college recruiters and about the NCAA. This excellent book is not only about basketball but about realizing a dream, and its appeal

should be very wide. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For many adolescents on Coney Island, basketball is their only escape from the urban hell of poverty, crime, and drugs. The Last Shot chronicles a group of teenagers playing for one of the best teams in New York, the Abraham Lincoln Secondary School Railsplitters. These young males continually cope with circumstances beyond their control in a society that has failed miserably to provide a safe environment and, more importantly, a good education. The author, who won a National Magazine Award for the story upon which this account is based, also explains how those living in high-risk areas suffered the most when the National Collegiate Athletic Association raised the standards of acceptable SAT scores for athletes. The young men whose stories Frey so poignantly captures exist in a world of "mean streets and basketball dreams." Recommended. L.R. Little, Penticton P.L., British Columbia

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A classic piece of sports writing, but for everyone. The author is a writer for the New York Times Magazine. In this book he writes about the lives of some high school basketball players/high school students (in that order). Like the other posters have noted, it's not just for basketball freaks. It's a well written story about some kids in the 90's who live in the projects in Brooklyn, Coney Island for the most part, and how much basketball means to them. In the book it seems like basketball is their only path to success. But they are up against the recruiters, hustlers and the SATS (which they need to get a 700 on but that's just out of reach for most). You get to meet the student athletes, Russell, Corey, Tchak, and Stephon, their parents, coaches, recruiters, local prophets, etc, and the author treats them all with a level of respect the New York Times Magazine accords the suit wearing sharks. If you get this book, you won't have to read long before you're committed to reading the whole thing. It's a very rare book indeed that leaves me wanting more. I would have loved to read a sequel. Alas, we only get an afterward, but the story had to end somewhere and the afterward was, well, quite the shock.

At first I wasn't sure what to expect with this book. I had to read it for a grad class on diversity in our schools, and so I was just hoping for a read that was more exciting than watching grass grow. I was pleasantly surprised when the book was able to hold my interest. I'm not saying that I couldn't put it down, because I certainly had no problem with that, but I didn't have any fear of picking it back up

again. The book chronicles the attempts by various members of a high school basketball team to get out of their poverty stricken, high crime neighborhood via basketball. The author shadowed several members of the team and skips back and forth between the perspectives of each in a way that doesn't jar the reader. The chapters are mixed evenly with dialogue and interviews with the players and pontification on the part of the author about the conditions of the neighborhood, culture of basketball, and current status of society in general. I was especially happy with the length of the book. It keeps a good pace, allow the author to make his point two or three times before finally coming to a close. I was at the point of losing interest in the book just as it ended, because at that point it was obvious that nothing new was going to be said, so the ending came right on time. If you want to vicariously experience growing up in a slum with no prospects, this is a good book for you. If you have to read it for school, this is a good book for you. If you like social commentary, this is a good book for you too. If you fall into any other category, I'd move on.

One of my favorite nonfiction sports books ever written. I read it when I was a kid, shortly after it came out. It's a book that had an enormous impact on me, and made me want to write about sports... which is a big part of what I do now for a living, working in college sports for my career. This may well be the only book that I can point to and legitimately describe it as having had a profound effect on the way my life played out.

If you are a basketball junkie this is one you will want to read. A bit dated but lots of notable characters - Rick Barnes, Fran Fraschilla, Rollie Massimino, etc. Chronicles the lives of a powerhouse team of New York area inner city kids playing on the blacktop and with the dreams of making it big and getting out of the projects and into the suburbs. Unfortunately, as the result of broken homes, lack of parental involvement in their education, a broken education system, lots of "advisors" whispering in their ears, coaches on the recruiting trail blowing smoke up their rears about their game instead of talking about their academics - many of them end up not qualifying academically for college and end up on challenging (which they are not prepared for) roads via the jr. college route. Not really a happy ending for any of them but fact based so you wonder how the next 3 or 4 classes fared.

"The Last Shot" serves as an interesting historical piece for basketball fans, as it was still relatively early in the explosive growth in recruiting, AAU basketball, and other intensity now driven by the Internet and cable TV. Back then, cell phones and Internet message boards were just two of the

factors awaiting. The pressure on these kids has only gotten larger, with Stephon Marbury still a bit unusual with his fame and visibility while so young. As a personal story, the Marbury family is not that interesting, with Dad Marbury particularly unappealing. At least they had a golden child too gifted and focused not to make it, as he did. The three other characters dominate and carry the story, each with a compelling angle and with updates in a welcome afterword in this paperback edition. It's hard not to feel bad about "Russell Thomas", trying so hard to hit the minimum 700 on the SAT and dealing with some personal demons, knowing that without school as an avenue for his exceptional talent, he'd be a future nobody. A 700 on the SAT is appallingly low, yet the author musters sympathy for that low threshold for students who never really gained even minimally decent instruction, for whatever reason, and survive in the barest intellectual environment. The world has changed greatly in nearly 20 years. Yet students still struggle mightily to get to college, and basketball is still a game where the fundamental excitement remains, where a single player can make a huge difference, and a convergence of talent, as at Lincoln High, can mean everything. Darcy Frey captured the game and the human drama nicely.

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