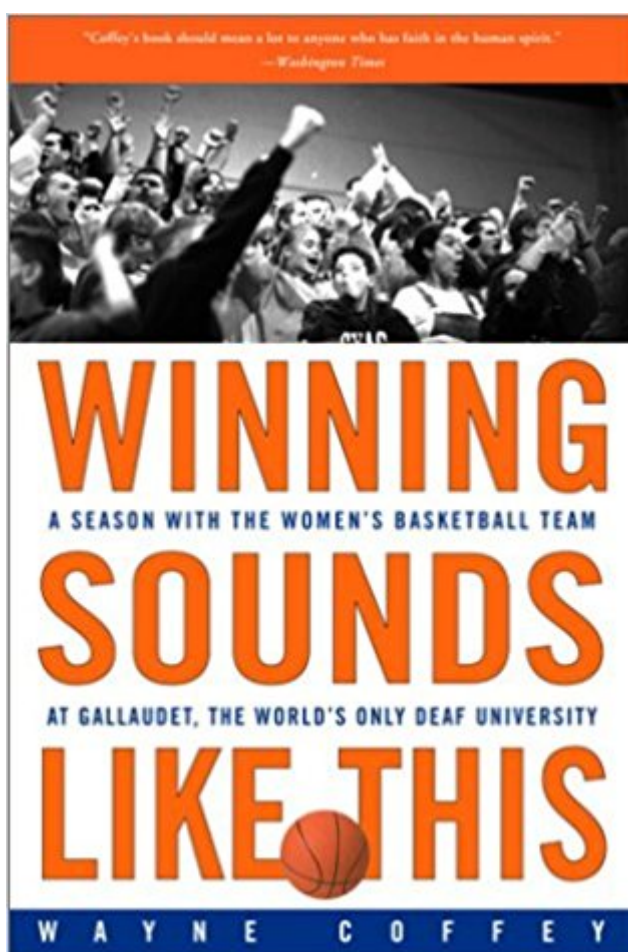


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# Winning Sounds Like This: A Season With The Women's Basketball Team At Gallaudet, The World's Only University For The Deaf



## Synopsis

The Gallaudet women's basketball team has just defeated the number one ranked team in the country, the College of New Jersey. A reporter, not wanting to be insensitive, delicately broaches the obvious question: "How can you play so well despite your hearing impairment?" Nanette Virnig, a forward for Gallaudet, puts him at ease. "We're not hearing impaired," she says. "We're deaf." Winning Sounds Like This is the remarkable story of the nation's most unique and inspiring women's basketball team and its 1999-2000 season. It is the touching chronicle of players who don't hear buzzers or cheers, a coach who has never used a whistle, and a university that is a mecca for deaf culture throughout the world. Wayne Coffey offers an intimate and unsparing look at the players' lives on and off the court, their struggles to overcome mistreatment and misconceptions of the hearing world, and their deeply rooted connection to one another.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gallaudet's 1999-2000 team came close to an NCAA Division III championship with the combined talent of its dedicated ballplayers and their coach, Kitty Baldrige, then a 25-year veteran. Coffey, a sportswriter for the New York Daily News, explores a college sports culture that operates on separate sensory terms: students and parents roar in the stands with their hands; players sign the set plays and swear at referees. Through this courtside sociology of deaf athletes, Coffey slowly

burrows into Gallaudet college basketball until deafness is less alien than the big egos of Division I and the salaries of the NBA. He builds a pyramid of court action, game bus rides, personality profiles and sidebars on Gallaudet (in Washington, D.C.) school history. Coffey is capable of deft finger rolls of prose as he describes such players as Ronda Jo Miller and Moroccan point guard Touria Ouahid. A great story in a good storyteller's hands, this volume is a refreshing read for the basketball fan. Coaches everywhere would do well to visit this account of women's play whenever they need a reminder of the passion that keeps players late in the gym. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sportswriter Coffey of the New York Daily News got permission to accompany Washington, DC's Gallaudet University women's basketball team for the 1999-2000 season. This is a team chronicle with a twist: the Bison players are all deaf. Their hearing coach, whose first language was American Sign Language, coaches with sign language and gestures instead of using a whistle. The Division III Bisons compete against hearing teams, and their success transforms fan curiosity into respect. Coffey intertwines player profiles, where we learn about their often tortuous roads to athletic success, with excursions into such topics as the history of deaf education, the controversy over sign language vs. lip reading, and the importance of deaf culture. Readers come away with great respect for these players, who somehow manage to master the intricacies of basketball without being able to yell out defensive assignment changes or hear referees' whistles. At least the coach can insult the referees in sign language without getting a technical! A good addition for public and college libraries. Kathy Ruffle, Coll. of New Caledonia Lib., Prince George, BC Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have very little to no interest whatsoever in basketball, but I do have a strong interest in deaf women that go against the odds. Thus, this book was half boring and half intriguing for me. Let's start with the intriguing. I really enjoyed the tidbits of deaf history. I never realized Ponce de Leon played a large role in the mass realization that deaf does not mean dumb. I liked reading about the girls' personal lives, namely Touria. (A few interesting pages are dedicated to this brave woman who is not only a deaf female, but a deaf female in a mostly hearing muslim household.) I was thrilled with the information provided about the first deaf president of the school, King Jordan. I was touched deeply by Ronda's story about her speech being made fun of and her six years of silence due to the embarrassment of it. I also enjoyed the few pages that went in depth about the controversial cochlear implants and what the girls have to say about it, "Quit trying to make us like you." I was

obviously moved numerous times. So why the low rating? I wanted more of the girls and their lives. The basketball is a HUGE part of the story, I won't deny that, but I don't need play by play details about every game. I will not remember who fouled, who free throwed, nor how many times somebody free throwed 2 pages later. My mind began drifting and I began skipping paragraphs to get back to the girls and their stories. I also felt there was a too much about Kitty, the coach. I simply did not take to her the way I did the team. A decent read. I recommend it for anybody who wants to know more about deaf culture and Gallaudet University.

I loved this book. I love to play sports but am not particularly interested in reading about sports. I picked this book up at a book fair for \$2 and soon became immersed in it. *Winning Sounds Like This* is not just about basketball, it's a window into the deaf culture and how things that most of us take for granted are so different for other people. At Gallaudet University, the ONLY deaf university in the world, basketball fans don't cheer and clap because the players wouldn't hear them, they wave their hands. Players can't rely on shouting another player's name, they must be in tune with their colleagues to know when to pass and when to receive. Students don't listen to music, rather they turn the sound up so loud that they can feel the vibrations. I found this book to be so interesting, from learning about educational options for deaf students to learning how they interact on the court, and how they compete with those who can hear. Oh, and they don't like to be called "hearing impaired" because they don't see themselves as impaired. They are deaf, and they don't see it as an impairment. I thought this book was wonderful and have recommended it to numerous friends. It is really, really interesting.

Women's basketball books occupy a special niche in sportswriting. Writing about male players, an author might ask, "How did they make it into the big time?" Writing about women, authors are forced to ask, "How did they get here at all?" This question adds a new dimension to the stories of women athletes. Players as young as today's collegians have had to overcome stereotypes. Many played on boys' teams -- or tried to. Gallaudet women have to overcome a double stereotype -- being not only female, but also deaf. There was a time when opposing teams would openly ridicule deaf basketball players. One player was devastated as a high school student when a coach from a Christian academy openly laughed at her speech. She made the team but never forgot the experience. However, the players want to be taken seriously as athletes. They do not want or need pity or condescension. To Coffey's credit, the book focuses on basketball, not deafness. We learn how players and teams compensate for a silent world. They can hear someone dribbling behind

them. Referees are briefed: players can't hear the whistle so they may not stop playing immediately. And players on "hearing" teams need ASL translators who understand basketball terms. Yet ultimately the story is about the game: coming together as a team and working to win. Like any sports book, there are stories of triumphs as well as tears. We come to care about the players as they, like all college athletes, balance basketball and books. Perhaps the most difficult story takes place after the book was written. Ronda Jo Miller, an All-American center, cannot reach her goal of playing on a WNBA team. In stories posted on the internet, we can learn that she earned admiration of players and coaches during the tryout camp. She eventually played professionally in Denmark, with a "hearing" team, and has played in Kansas City with an expansion league, the WNBL. What happens to the other athletes? Playing on a winning team can change lives and I found myself hoping they will continue to feel like winners, long after the season has ended.

Wayne Coffey not only knows sports but he knows how to write tight, action packed chapters. This story moves. Interspersed with backgrounds on the team members, the history of deaf culture, the story tracks the team through an incredible season. I am not an avid basketball fan nor did I have any particular interest in deaf culture, but this book captured my interest from the first page and held it throughout. A rare find.

Beautifully written that, at turns, is funny, touching, fascinating and absorbing. I read it at a single sitting. Such wonderful character studies of the players, their families and the world of Gallaudet. If you like basketball, if you like visiting other cultures or if you just like stories that bring people to life, you'll love this book. Highly recommended.

This book is so good I couldn't stop reading it! It's an inspirational story about human nature, what it takes to be the best and something I knew nothing about previously...deaf culture. It's a well written, must read for anyone who has ever worked hard for something...hearing or deaf.

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