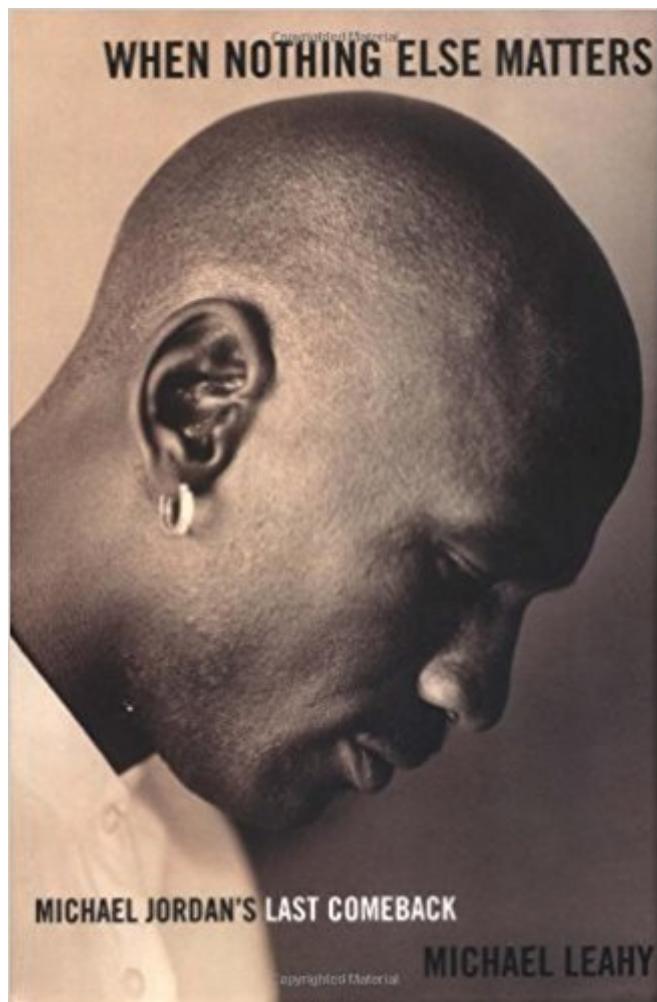


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When Nothing Else Matters: Michael Jordan's Last Comeback



Synopsis

As one of the greatest, most celebrated athletes in history, Michael Jordan conquered professional basketball as no one before. Powered by a potent mix of charisma, near superhuman abilities and a ferocious drive to dominate the game, he achieved every award and accolade conceivable before retiring from the Chicago Bulls and taking an 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 decided it was time to reclaim the court that was once his. **WHEN NOTHING ELSE MATTERS** is the definitive account of Jordan's equally spectacular and disastrous return to basketball. Having closely followed Jordan's final two seasons, Michael Leahy draws a fascinating portrait of an intensely complex man hampered by injuries and assaulted by younger players eager to usurp his throne. In this enthralling book Jordan emerges as an ambitious, at times deeply unattractive character with, unsurprisingly, a monstrous ego. **WHEN NOTHING ELSE MATTERS** is an absorbing portrait not only of one athlete's overriding ambition, but also of a society so in thrall to its sports stars that it is blind to all their faults.

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Customer Reviews

After serving as president and part owner of the Washington Wizards for two years, Jordan, bored by his executive duties and frustrated by the team's poor play, returned to the court in 2001 in a bid to revitalize the struggling basketball franchise. But the aging superstar's attempt to resurrect the team flopped as the Wizards failed to make the playoffs in either of Jordan's two playing seasons.

While the highs and lows of Jordan's comeback are known to most basketball fans, Leahy, a Washington Post feature writer who covered Jordan's return, offers an in-depth look at the inner turmoil that plagued the Jordan-led Wizards. In a smartly written, often angry work that is as much a sports story as a psychology study and condemnation of the media that built up the Jordan myth, Leahy not only documents Jordan's performance on the floor, but examines what motivated him to play despite serious knee problems. Leahy also deals with the role sportswriters (he makes it clear he isn't one) play in building America's athletes into godlike characters, a practice he abhors. Leahy has no use for idol worship and casts all three of the book's main figures—Jordan, coach Doug Collins and majority owner Abe Pollin—in unfavorable lights. This engaging read is marred by one flaw: Leahy's tendency to insert himself into the story. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Michael Jordan may have been the greatest basketball player ever to lace 'em up, but he has not always been a likable man. At 38, three years retired from his championship run in Chicago, Jordan was serving as president of the Washington Wizards when he decided to join the team as a player. Washington Post staffer Leahy observed it all, from the triumphs--now and then MJ did seem to be an ageless wonder--to the very ugly moments of humiliated coaches and teammates who did not measure up to Jordan's personal standard of excellence and acquiescence. This is not a pretty portrayal of Jordan, but it is consistent with the assessment of his strengths and weaknesses offered by Sam Smith in *The Jordan Rules* (1991). If anything, this account is tinged with melancholy in its portrayal of the alpha male finally being exiled from the herd. This is an intelligent, persuasively written account of an athlete who remains one of our most recognizable celebrities. Expect the phone lines to be buzzing on the sports talk shows. Wes LukowskyCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I rarely give anything five stars, but I'll give this one five...even allowing for Leahy's reflexive (like all sportswriters) occasional liberal asides. For one thing it's not a suck-up book, but Leahy does give Jordan the level of respect he deserves the times he deserves it. But it's a rare thing...an honest portrayal of an athletic god who revealed himself to be a lot less than that in his comeback. Despite being a huge basketball fan, I rarely watched any of Jordan's games with the Wizards. The whole thing was pointless...just something to satisfy the ego of an over-the-hill player who if he wanted to play again should have gone to a contending team and subordinated his talents to that team. But Jordan couldn't do that. He still had to be the man on a mediocre club. The Wizards "improved"

somewhat during Jordan's two years, but it's hard to see that other the extra income accrued to the Wizards thanks to Jordan's comeback, how he helped the team. The last thing a poor to mediocre club needs is an ex-superstar who thinks he can be the big star again when his body tells him he can't. But I liked Leahy's book for other reasons as well. Most sports books recite the stats but fail to delineate how the player did it. But Leahy describes Jordan's play. How he got his points and how he got stuffed. I got the feeling after reading many sports bios in the last few years that the writers were quite unable to describe how their subject did it. But Leahy knows the game and was able to relate the levels of skill and talent exhibited by pro players necessary to make it in the NBA. It's an unflinching, candid look at certainly one of the greatest athletes to ever play any sport and maybe the greatest basketball player ever. Leahy does his job knowing that his subject would freeze him out. Which gives Leahy a level of integrity far above the usual posterior smoochers in the press. I doubt this book will hurt Jordan's reputation too much. When he was a star he was known for his arrogance, egotism and nastiness. His level of superstardom protected him from the usual criticism leveled at most superstars when people find out they've feet of clay. But it is refreshing to know that not every sportswriter falls victim to the phony love phrases about their subject often offered by scribblers. This overall unflattering look at Jordan (and some of his sycophants in the media like Michael Wilbon) is an excellent antidote to all paeans of praise generally written about very human athletes.

Leahy's a good reporter; just not nearly as good as he thinks he is. He took advantage of the access being from The Washington Post gave him, but the book is at least 100 pages too long. To be fair, lots of books are 100 pages too long. If you are going to write about sports in any context, you better come to the table with a respect for the craft because it isn't as easy as a lot of news reporters think. Leahy lacked that from start to finish. This could have been a very good book; instead it was barely okay.

It has often been the case that we tend to etch our hopes and dreams in the coattails of superstar athletes who exceed our expectations time and again. Each time, the bar is raised until the star is brought down to earth by these same expectations that made them stars in the first place. Such is the tale provided by Michael Leahy in this definitive work on Michael Jordan's comeback with the Wizards. The account provides details from Jordan's start as an executive to his comeback and to his eventual firing (not unexpected as it first seemed). Interesting details abound in this book in contrast to the droning sound bites found in newspapers who seem quite reluctant to call out the

naked emperor. Examples include the true extent of Jordan's tendinitis, the effect of Jordan's injury to his right index finger plus Phil Jackson's thoughts on the comeback. Also, Leahy provides quite a convincing critique not only on Jordan the player but on Jordan the playing executive as well. My only problem with this book is that it tends to get repetitive at times - Pollin's firing of Jordan and the Karla Knafeh story is retold more than once. However, it stands on its own in chronicling Jordan's days as a Wizard which luckily for Jordan will always remain a footnote to an otherwise marvelous career. Most of us would have considered that jump shot at Salt Lake City the highlight of our lives, but then again Mike still has more than half of his life to live.

A well-written book that seems mostly critical of Jordan's decision to return for two final years with the Washington Wizards. Fascinating look into the daily life of the world's greatest basketball player trying to wring what was left of his fading skills. If I have a criticism - the book seems to bash Jordan for tainting his legacy. In my opinion, it's Jordan's legacy to taint.

I thought this book was a really good read--intriguing and honest, even though the author may have seemed a bit cynical and a little self-indulgent at times. After reading *The Jordan Rules*, this seemed an appropriate follow-up, a truly good look at the imbalances that created the greatest competitive spirit of my lifetime (as Jordan turns 50, he's now on the record as admitting to some of his over-competitive faults as they detract from his enjoyment in his post-basketball years). On the merits of the book alone, I give it 4 stars out of 5. So why 1 star? Here's why: I read eagerly all the way up to page 340, at which point the text jumped directly to page 405, then continued all the way to the end of the book, at page 435. Then it started back at page 373 and proceeded again to the end of the book. The binding is not broken; everything looks fine at a casual glance, but the fact remains that PAGES 341 TO 372 ARE MISSING FROM MY COPY OF THIS BOOK. However, because this book rested on my shelf for several weeks before I could read it, 's return window has closed and according to policy I cannot exchange this book for one that is properly bound. Although cheerfully recommends that I sell this book that I cannot exchange, I don't want to foist this problem on someone else. Therefore, the best I can do is warn others to check their purchase before their return windows expire. The book is definitely worth a read, but please make sure you get what you paid for before reading. I never thought I'd have to worry about something like this from ...

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