



One Shot at Forever: A Small Town, an Unlikely Coach, and a Magical Baseball Season

By Chris Ballard

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In 1971, a small-town high school baseball team from rural Illinois playing with hand-me-down uniforms and peace signs on their hats defied convention and the odds. Led by an English teacher with no coaching experience, the Macon Ironmen emerged from a field of 370 teams to become the smallest school in modern Illinois history to make the state final, a distinction that still stands. There, sporting long hair, and warming up to Jesus Christ Superstar, the Ironmen would play a dramatic game against a Chicago powerhouse that would change their lives forever.

In a gripping, cinematic narrative, *Sports Illustrated* writer Chris Ballard tells the story of the team and its coach, Lynn Sweet, a hippie, dreamer and intellectual who arrived in Macon in 1966, bringing progressive ideas to a town stuck in the Eisenhower era. Beloved by students but not administration, Sweet reluctantly took over a rag-tag team, intent on teaching the boys as much about life as baseball. Inspired by Sweet's unconventional methods and led by fiery star Steve Shartzter and spindly curveball artist John Heneberry, the undersized, undermanned Macon Ironmen embarked on an improbable postseason run that infuriated rival coaches and buoyed an entire town.

Beginning with Sweet's arrival, Ballard takes readers on a journey back to the Ironmen's historic season and then on to the present day, returning to the 1971 Ironmen to explore the effect the game had on their lives' trajectories--and the men they've become because of it.

Engaging and poignant, *One Shot at Forever* is a testament to the power of high school sports to shape the lives of those who play them, and it reminds us that there are few bonds more sacred than that among a coach, a team, and a town

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Editorial Review

Review

"*One Shot at Forever* is tender, fun, bittersweet, with a great narrative that just motors. It also features the funkiest coach not just in the history of baseball but the history of sport--an unforgettable character in a beautiful and unforgettable book."

--**Buzz Bissinger, author of *Father's Day* and *Friday Night Lights***

"*One Shot at Forever* is powerful, inspirational and--in an era where sports are too often marred by scandal--as pure and true as a warm spring breeze. This isn't merely a book about baseball. It's a book about heart."

--**Jeff Pearlman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Bad Guys Won***

"...Reminds us why sports matter and why sports writing has such great power to inspire...One hell of a good story, and Ballard has written one hell of a good book." -- **Jonathan Eig, *Chicago Tribune***

"[A] nonfiction gem about an underdog team that made good. This is the kind of baseball book that has long arms: YA readers, avid baseball fans, sports readers, and narrative nonfiction readers who like to be firmly set in a particular time and place should all find it joyful."

--***Library Journal***

"There's a reason Chris Ballard has emerged as one of America's top sports writers. *One Shot at Forever* is powerful, inspirational and-in an era where sports are too often marred by scandal-as pure and true as a warm spring breeze. This isn't merely a book about baseball. It's a book about heart."--Jeff Pearlman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Boys Will Be Boys* and *The Bad Guys Won*

About the Author

Chris Ballard is the author of four books and a senior writer at *Sports Illustrated*, where he specializes in narrative features. He's also written for the *New York Times Magazine*, among other publications, and his work has been anthologized in *The Best American Magazine Writing* and *The Best American Sports Writing* series. For the last two years, he's taught a class at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

Ballard joined *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* in September 2000. He has covered the NBA and MLB, written two dozen cover stories, penned the back page "Point After" column and reported on everything from pigeon racing to Jake Plummer's post-football life to the Vancouver riots. He was one of five 2012 finalists for a National Magazine Award in profile writing and was the 2011 winner of The Joanie Award for a story about Cal Berkeley coxswain Jill Costello, who died of lung cancer after her senior year. Five of his stories have been optioned for feature films, including "One Shot."

Before joining *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*, Ballard was an intern at the *Courier-Post* in Camden, NJ and attended Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. A native Californian, Ballard graduated from Pomona College, where he played basketball and was a mediocre high jumper. He lives in Berkeley with his wife, his two daughters, and two dogs. He thinks every restaurant should serve at least one quality IPA.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Luba Jacobs:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or maybe goal; it means that book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. These are reading whatever they get because their hobby is usually reading a book. Why not the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, man feel need book if they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you'll have this One Shot at Forever: A Small Town, an Unlikely Coach, and a Magical Baseball Season.

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Gertrude Knudsen:

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