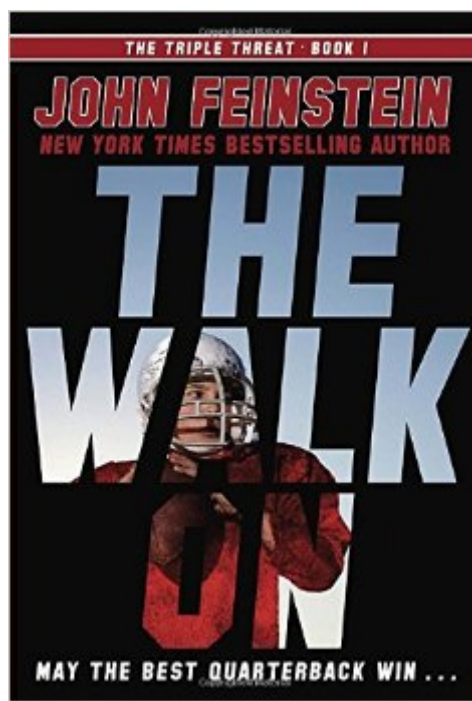


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The Walk On (The Triple Threat, 1)



Synopsis

Bestselling sportswriter John Feinstein kicks off a new series for middle grade featuring Alex Myers, a student athlete who tries to take on the sports establishment in his new town. Alex Myers is a quarterback, but from the first day of football practice, it's clear that that position is very much filled by the coach's son, Matt. Alex has the better arm, but Matt has more experience and the coach's loyalty. Alex finally gets a chance to show what he can do when Matt is injured, and he helps win a key game to keep the Lions' bid for the state championship alive. But just when his star is rising, Alex gets blindsided—the state has started drug testing, and Alex's test comes back positive for steroids. Alex knows that's not right. But he doesn't know if it's a mistake or if someone wants to make sure he can't play. . . . John Feinstein has been praised as the best writer of sports books in America today • (The Boston Globe), and this first installment in the Triple Threat series is his most thrilling and suspenseful novel yet. Fans of Mike Lupica, Tim Green, and Paul Volponi will want to check out The Walk On, and its companion, The Sixth Man. A cliffhanger of a football novel bristling with social, personal, familial and ethical issues to complement the gridiron action. . . . All the goods for the sports enthusiast and more. • Kirkus Reviews

From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (45 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

I am trying like mad to get my 11-year-old nephew to read more, mostly for selfish reasons. It's much easier to babysit the kid when he's ensconced in a book. I targeted John Feinstein's *The Walk On* as possible bait. And it's worked, son! Kid hadn't bothered me all day, excepting one time when he wanted to huddle to talk about the word "ostracize." Yeah, that word becomes relevant in the book. Alex Myers is a walk on, recently moved from Boston to Philadelphia. At 14 years old Alex is a three sports wunderkind. He's enrolled in Crescent Heights High and rarin' to take local varsity football by storm. He's a quarterback who can throw the ball with remarkable range and accuracy. Alex thinks he's a straight-up shoe-in to start. Except there's already a hometown hero in place whose dad happens to be the school's tyrannical football coach. So can the new kid in town carve himself a niche in a team with an established pecking order? Way to rock the boat, rookie. *The Walk On* holds very strong echoes of Mike Lupica's *Game Changers* trilogy and of that terrific movie *Varsity Blues*. Lupica and Feinstein are both bestselling sportswriters and maybe they've hung out in the same watering holes. In a world riddled with unoriginal stories, it's the execution of them that'll make or break the reading experience. With *The Walk On* you note the familiar tropes and anticipate each storytelling beat. But it doesn't matter because Feinstein's writing draws you into Alex's world. The characters are very engaging, from Jonas, the New York transplant and instantly the team's best receiver, to Christine Whitford, intrepid reporter for the school paper, to Alex's quarterback rival Matt Gordon. Jonas is one of those indispensable friends, someone who has your back no matter what. Christine honors the journalistic code with her integrity and a bulldog pursuit of the truth. And Matt, in lesser hands, would have been etched as a macho bully. Feinstein instead makes him a truly likeable character, and maybe the most fascinating character. Matt acknowledges and supports Alex for the big talent he is. Of the two, Matt is easily the more natural and BETTER leader, never mind that having Alex as the third-string quarterback - NOT second-string because Matt's coach dad is truly a t00l - is putting all kinds of pressure on Matt. The friendship between him and Alex is one of several highpoints in the book. Feinstein injects a smidge of family drama to further the narrative conflict. Alex is a child of divorce, and you can see him struggle to come to terms with his dad's inability to commit to visiting him and his younger sister. But Matt Gordon, hometown hero, may have the more troubling family life. Because, I repeat, his dad is a t00l, not too far off from the dictatorial and vainglorious jackhattery that defined Coach Kilmer (Jon Voight) from *Varsity Blues*. Sucks that Matt, a genuinely nice kid, has to cover for his dad's frequent acts of

hubris. It's a sports story, so there's flexing and posturing, but also fantastic dramatic content and interesting group dynamics. Feinstein plays up Alex and Matt's strengths and weaknesses and how the two QBs complement each other's playing style. It's a given that we root for Alex, but Feinstein is very kind to Matt Gordon, and I appreciate that. Feinstein raises the controversial issue hinging on keeping faith with your team versus speaking out about the hurtful things that go on on the field and in the locker room. There are admirable adults in the book, from Alex's supportive mom to the quarterback coach who also happens to be the high school newspaper's chief editor - can you appreciate that dude's thorny position? The Walk On's bread and butter is the grand heroics performed on the football field, and Feinstein absolutely nails those moments. But those are just punctuating moments. It's to be hoped that, for the young readers, the lasting impact is derived from the slice of life moments and the thought-provoking moments, and the friendships fostered, and the characters' many kindnesses to each other. My nephew tore thru this book and then demanded more. Luckily, I could tell him that this was only the first book in a series. Alex Myers is a three sports wunderkind, remember? Basketball season is around the corner - and baseball after that - and we'll be seeing him soon.

THE WALK ON is the first book in a trilogy about Alex Myers, triple threat, meaning that he is an outstanding athlete in three sports - football, basketball and baseball. This first book is about the football skills he brings to Chester Heights High School. He and his mom and sister move to Philadelphia from Boston after his parents go through a divorce. So even though probably 90% of the book is focused on football, the remaining portion does focus on family issues, girl issues, friend issues. This trilogy is targeted to those readers 10 years-old and up and I thought it was appropriate to that age group. The book could have been edited a bit for length, in my opinion. It is 359 pages long and has an ABUNDANCE of football practice and game pages. Some of that length could have gone to a bit more character development, even though I did get a good idea of the characters based on what is written about them. Middle school/high school boys will probably appreciate all the sports. I just think the audience could be broadened a bit just with a little editing. My major complaint is that this is the first book in a trilogy, a series book, and it ends on a cliffhanger. And the next book that is focused on Alex's basketball career isn't due out until September 2015. A year is a long time to wait (and remember). I do recommend this book to anyone interested in high school football or football in general. It is well written and accurately depicts the game and high school environment, even though being toned down for middle school readers. No profanity, no drinking, no recreational drug use are included in the book.

THE WALK ON: THE TRIPLE THREAT-BOOK 1 By John Feinstein Alfred A Knopf, New York, 2014 ISBN 978-0-385-753348-7 (ebook) Paperback: \$7.99 This is the first of The Triple Threat Series about Alex Myers, a high school freshman who had to change schools because his parents are divorcing. Alex is a star athlete who has to prove himself at his new school. This story is about football and his trials as a triple string quarterback. Here is the opening paragraph: "Twelve is taken. Make the team and then you can worry about a number. But you aren't going to get twelve." Alex Myers was standing in front of the equipment cage in the locker room at Chester Heights High School. School didn't open for another week, but football season began on the last Friday in August, so tryouts and practice started early. Alex had two days to show coaches that a freshman should be practicing with the varsity. He is a new small fish in a strange and larger pond. He is trying to adjust to life without his dad and the friends he had to leave when he moved with his mom and his sister. He is a nice guy who has to ride around on a bicycle because he is only fourteen and isn't old enough to drive. I have a weakness for sports stories. The characters are always well described and have clearly stated goals. They want to win, make the team, and get the girl. I love clearly stated character goals. The writing was well done. The game action was well written and kept the pace going. The dialogue was believable for the characters. Here is an example of the action description: Alex stepped up. He noticed that Coach Hillier had Jonas ninth in line, meaning he would be Alex's third and last receiver. Alex took the toss that Coach Hillier was making to start each play--sort of a standing snap--then dropped back a couple of steps and easily targeted the 45-yard line, the ball dropping gently into the receiver's hands. Coach Hillier looked at him and just said, "Nice," in a voice so soft Alex was pretty sure he was the only one who could hear it. "If you like action, you'll like this story. If you like suspense, you'll like this story. If you like stories about high school sports, you'll like this story. Not only that, you'll like the other two in the series. I give this story a five out of a possible five. I like all three things: action, suspense, and sports stories. I like rooting for the underdog, the third string quarterback who is new in school and wants to make the team. I'm not going to tell you if he gets the girl.

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