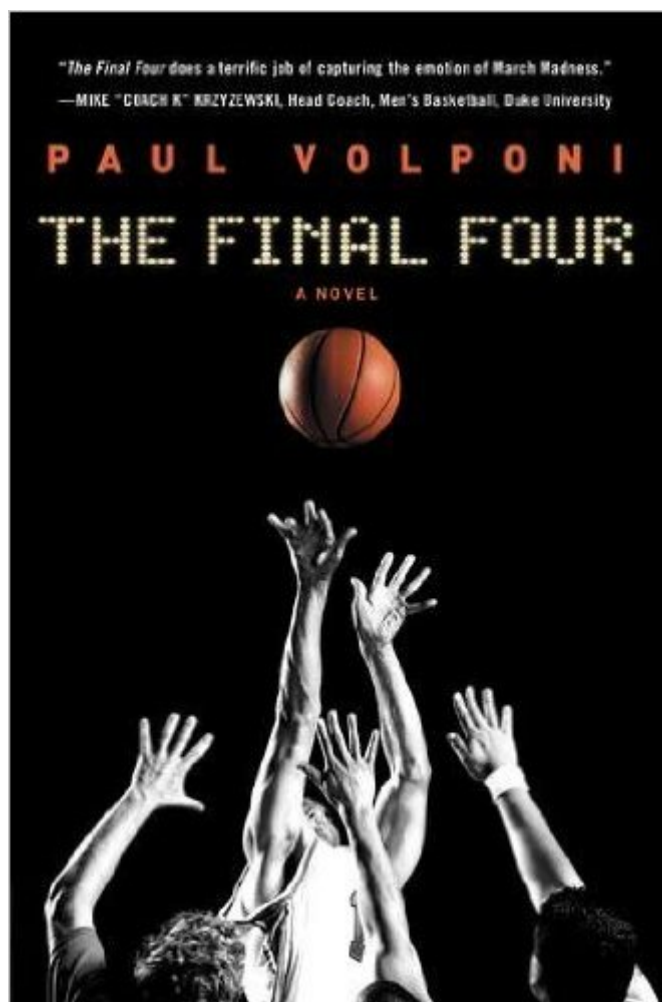


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The Final Four



Synopsis

"Volponi, a multiple award-winning author, keeps the tension high from the first to last page ...The Final Four is definitely a winner." —VOYA, starred review
March Madness is in full swing, and there are only four teams left in the NCAA basketball championship. The heavily favored Michigan Spartans and the underdog Troy Trojans meet in the first game in the semifinals, and it's there that the fates of Malcolm, Roko, Crispin, and M.J. intertwine. As the last moments tick down on the game clock, you'll learn how each player went from being a kid who loves to shoot hoops to a powerful force in one of the most important games of the year. Which team will leave the Superdome victorious? In the end it will come down to who has the most skill, the most drive, and the most heart."Volponi nails it when it counts in this dynamic story." —Booklist, starred review
"Volponi adroitly renders authentic and inspired basketball action." —The New York Times
Book Review

Book Information

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African-American

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Excellent book and very exciting read Mr. Volponi. The story works on so many levels that anyone should feel at home in between its pages. It's not only a book for young adults, as I, an older battle scarred warrior, gained much pleasure and insight from the story. All the excitement of watching a

classic basketball tournament game is injected into this story. You'll catch yourself cheering for or against a team or player as if you've placed a bet down in Vegas. Though the primary focus is on four of the young players and their challenges on and off the basketball court, it's the inspiring people who've touched their lives that make this story go. If it were a movie the Oscar for supporting actor would be split between the two head coaches. The pace of the story is not unlike a basketball game full of intense drama; up tempo fast breaks, slowed down game planning, exciting offense, pressuring defense and a heart pounding climax. Very creative idea using the historic Trojans vs Spartans battle as a theme for the competitors and their showdown. While one team must win and the other has their tournament bubble burst, the life lessons learned from a team experience is worth more than any trophy. Who, besides those playing the game, knew that basketball is a game of communication? Author Paul Volponi does! I suppose the release date of this book was meant to coincide with the college March Madness schedule. It sure works for me as I will be tuned in to hopefully see yet another Cinderella team make a run at the championship. 5+ Stars "I've failed over and over and over again in my life, and that is why I succeed." Michael Jordan

"Live Radio Broadcast of the Game. There are three broadcasters, a play by play man, a color commentator, and sideline reporter", Laura also known as Book Snob. Note: The book review of Final Four will be written in a similar format to parts of the book. Color Commentator: Ladies and Gentlemen, this is it, the final four, the big game between Michigan State Spartans and underdog, Troy University Trojans. Who will win remains to be seen, but both sides are anxious to move up to the championship game. "The last time the Spartans and the Trojans met for stakes this high was in the Trojan War of Greek Mythology, when the Spartans left a huge horse outside the gates of Troy." pg. 6. I wonder, will the Trojans rewrite history here tonight? Side line reporter: There are 4 main players being represented in tonight's game, I mean book. Malcolm is the leading scorer for the Spartans as a freshman and is ready to make his move into the NBA. He is a little cocky and self-serving but maybe he has earned it. He recently lost his sister in a drive-by shooting and you can see her image tattooed on his arm. Michael Jordan also plays for the Spartans and you guessed it, was named after the famed NBA star Michael Jordan. Michael is a junior benchwarmer thrown into the game. He is roommates with Malcolm and lives under the shadow of his name. Roko Bacic AKA Red Bull is a junior playing for Troy. He is a native Croatian who has lived in the states since his senior year of high school. His uncle taught him to play basketball on the streets of Croatia and now he is living his dream, playing college basketball. His parents are very proud of him. His uncle was killed by the Croatian mob. Crispin Rice: A senior who plays for the Trojans is in love with a girl

named Hope and she becomes known as his good luck charm and is nicknamed, Hope of Troy. He proposed to her in front of live television about 6 weeks earlier. I wonder how things are going with this young couple. Crispin needs to remain focused here today as the two teams head into battle. Play by Play man: I can't believe it folks, we are heading in to overtime tonight. These teams are tightly matched and the players all deserve to come out on top. You will have to read the book to find out what team wins the game. Volponi, has written a book that takes place entirely during one basketball game. Reading the Final Four is like having front row seats during a competitive game, where you know the key players first hand, their backgrounds, hopes, dreams and even failures. The Final Four is full of court action, interviews, journal entries and play by play commentary. Side Line Reporter: I am not a big basketball fan so I am not sure I am qualified to report on the game, but the book was awesome for someone who doesn't know much about basketball. For people who play the game, I can only imagine that they would love a book like this. Final Four is fast paced, full of street courts and college ball, living a tough life and then living a dream. Volponi doesn't shy away from some of the issues related to college ball like the fact that lots and lots of people are making money off the games, yet the players play for free and the aren't allowed to take any gifts or sell any of their tickets for games. It is interesting to look at these issues and more, through the eyes of the players in The Final Four. Color Commentator: Like basketball? Got Game? Get yourself to The Final Four.

THE FINAL FOUR IS A SLAM DUNK! You don't have to know anything about basketball to get hooked. For those who follow me on Twitter and Goodreads, it's no secret that I am a huge fan of Paul Volponi's. I became intrigued by his work when RESPONSE received the Milwaukee County Teen Book Award Honor in 2010. After that, I devoured his novels and dubbed Paul the King of Urban YA Fiction. THE FINAL FOUR is one of Paul's finest novels. Volponi writes about March Madness, the time when the best college basketball teams play for the NCAA Championship. It's huge money, huge exposer, huge pressure. Volponi tells the story of two teams battling in the Final Four through the eyes of four players. Interspersed are newspaper and TV interviews, commentary. One of the characters is Michael Jordan-imagine what it must be like to love basketball, be named after one of the best players to ever play in the NBA, and always having to deal with being compared to your namesake: THE Michael Jordan. Another character is Malcolm McBride, a young man who's nickname is "One and Done" because he's only playing one year of college ball until he's eligible to enter the NBA draft. Malcolm's outlook on life has definitely been shaped by poverty and the horrible experiences that have plagued his life. Crispin Rice is a character I really enjoyed, a

leader for sure. But his life isn't as storybook as the media makes it out to be. My favorite character is Roco Bacic who survived some horrific experiences in Croatia to come to the US and fulfill his dream of playing basketball. Some of his story is told through a personal journal that captures unforgettable moments of terror. The reader becomes immersed in the players' lives on and off the basketball court. The novel is rife with raw emotion, tragedy, and triumph. There were several passages where I shook my head in awe. Even if you rarely or never read realistic fiction, THE FINAL FOUR should be your first. Get swept away in March Madness. I highly recommend this novel for young men - seventh grade and up - who are reluctant readers. THE FINAL FOUR may very well be just the novel to inspire a love for reading.

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