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# Press Play



## Synopsis

Booklist Top 10 Sports Books for Youth: 2015 Pound by sweaty pound, Greg Dunsmore's plan is working. Greg is steadily losing weight while gaining the material he needs to make the documentary that will get him into film school and away from the constant jeers of 'Dun the Tun.' But when Greg captures footage of brutal and bloody hazing by his town's championship-winning lacrosse team, he knows he has evidence that could damage as much as it could save. And if the harm is to himself and his future, is revealing the truth worth the cost?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up At nearly 400 pounds, Greg is determined to shed his excess weight while making a documentary of the process. One day, Greg and his friend, Quinn, witness the lacrosse team involved in brutal hazing rituals, which Greg captures on film. Quinn wants to go to the principal, who is also the coach, but Greg convinces his friend that they need to record more evidence. Eventually, fellow film-geek, Ella, is drawn into the affair, as is Ollie, another boy desperate to lose weight. Devine describes the hazing and other bullying in explicit detail, making the book feel nauseatingly voyeuristic. The violence ranges from threats, insults, and web smears to beating victims unconscious, repeated blows to the genitals, "teabagging," finger-breaking, and force-feeding excrement. Greg has credibility problems due to his past attempts to create a Michael Moore-style documentary about the school and community. Still, it is difficult to understand why he never considers going to the police, or his parents. The primary characters are overloaded with

background complications. Greg's mother is on a passive-aggressive quest to keep him fat. Ella has survived a suicide attempt triggered by bullying at her last school. Quinn is intimidated by his father and by his father's clients, who have sexually harassed him. Ollie's beloved grandfather is dying of obesity-related illness while his family members comfort themselves with food. Plot and character development are slow moving in a predictable direction. An additional purchase for libraries looking to strengthen their collections on bullying. — Rachel Anne Mencke, St. Matthew's Parish School, Pacific Palisades, CA

— This is definitely a Devine novel; there's so much sweat, blood, and adrenaline that you almost need to wring out the pages. . . . A tough, smart look at weight issues, self-respect, and our intrinsic desire to belong at all costs. — Booklist [A] page-turner. — VOYA

Compelling, current, eventually uplifting.

Solid, gripping. This book is brutal and honest and moving. Surpasses the teen challenges and reaches to the core of being human. Stay quiet or speak out?

Greg Dunsmore — known as — "Dun the Ton" — wants to get the hell out of his town, and knows film school is his ticket. He's working on a documentary about his own weight loss journey, hoping it will get him in. While he's recording his workouts one day, he also captures a brutal instance of hazing by the upper classmen of the school lacrosse team. Now, he's committed to exposing the truth — but as he discovers how high the conspiracy to cover the abuse up goes, the hazing continues, and he and his friends find themselves in the team's crosshairs. Is there a point where the truth is less important than your own safety? This is Chris Crutcher meets Robert Cormier, with moral dilemmas coming at the characters — and therefore, the readers — right and left. Greg is on a personal journey when he discovers the hazing, but he struggles multiple times with what action to take — the guys on the team are jerks — does he have personal responsibility to them? Why? He has no personal investment in this, and has so much to lose. Does he want to expose the abuse for his personal gain? And if he does, does that make him a bad person? Does it matter, as long as the story is told? This is a brutal book. There are language and

content issues that some readers may not be able to handle, but this book WILL keep you up at night, waiting to get to that next page, chapter, section, ending. Greg and his friends grow as characters and people throughout this book, but there are no black and white good guys or bad guys. And that may be both the most difficult thing to handle AND the best part of this book. Does a culture of abuse excuse the abusers, if they were once the abused? Ask yourself this as you read. Bottom line – get this book on the shelves in your local libraries and bookstores, especially in school districts with popular sports teams. There are kids out there who need to be reading and talking about this book, whether or not they’ve ever held a baseball bat, a football, or a lacrosse stick. Press Play is one of those game-changing books that will forever alter the way you look at things. Make sure this book is accessible to teens, and get them talking about it.

Greg Dunsmore wants to escape the small town whose main source of pride and revenue is the high school’s sports team that has made his life hell. Now in his junior year, Greg focuses on putting together a portfolio that will ensure he gets accepted to film school. While documenting his weight loss story he inadvertently captures the violent hazing and abuse the lacrosse team endures during practice but what shocks Greg even more is everyone who’s involved. Press Play is a young adult story that delves into hazing and bullying with a dark intensity and unflinching honesty. It presents an interesting social commentary on high school life, family dynamics and society. I liked that it had a deeper message about honesty, integrity, courage and change. The narration is engaging with a cadence and distinct voice that makes the main character feel genuine and relatable. The characterization was great and I enjoyed reading the interactions between the characters as their relationships strengthened. I liked that each of the characters had their own issues and that they supported one another as they worked through them. The story explored the different variations of bullying and their effects. It was interesting that it also showed how these issues aren’t isolated to just high school but can also bleed into adulthood. The story presented a variety of moral dilemmas and I liked that the main character struggled with them before choosing a course of action. I enjoyed reading about the interests the main character had. It helped offset the intensity and was fun to read. I liked that technology factored into the story while also showcasing the culture and effort put into filmmaking. The main character’s weight loss story felt authentic and honest. I was surprised at the depth it held and how it further strengthened the impact of the story. [Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher, Running Press Kids, through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.]

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