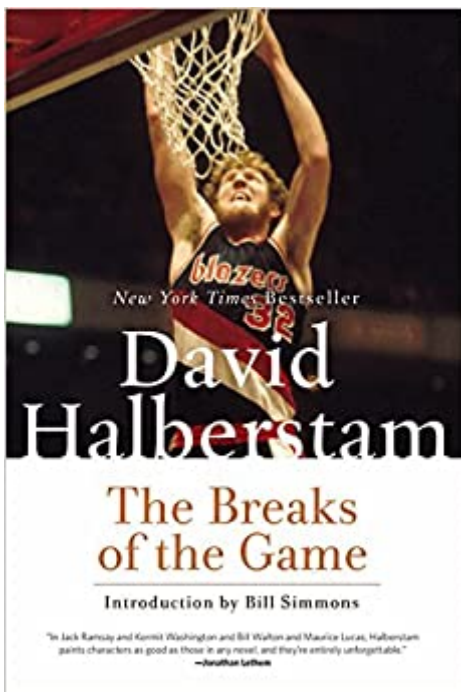


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# The Breaks Of The Game



## Synopsis

More than 6 years after his death David Halberstam remains one of this country's most respected journalists and revered authorities on American life and history in the years since WWII. A Pulitzer Prize-winner for his ground-breaking reporting on the Vietnam War, Halberstam wrote more than 20 books, almost all of them bestsellers. His work has stood the test of time and has become the standard by which all journalists measure themselves. The New York Times bestseller, now with a new introduction! *The Breaks of the Game* focuses on one grim season (1979-80) in the life of the Bill Walton-led Portland Trail Blazers, a team that only three years before had been NBA champions. The tactile authenticity of Halberstam's knowledge of the basketball world is unrivaled. Yet he is writing here about far more than just basketball. This is a story about a place in our society where power, money, and talent collide and sometimes corrupt, a place where both national obsessions and naked greed are exposed. It's about the influence of big media, the fans and the hype they subsist on, the clash of ethics, the terrible physical demands of modern sports (from drugs to body size), the unreal salaries, the conflicts of race and class, and the consequences of sport converted into mass entertainment and athletes transformed into superstars--all presented in a way that puts the reader in the room and on the court, and *The Breaks of the Game* in a league of its own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*The Breaks of the Game* is sports reporting at its finest--basketball's equivalent to Roger Kahn's *The Boys of Summer*. Join David Halberstam on his yearlong journey with the 1979 Portland Trail

Blazers and witness professional basketball from the inside, where front-office egos, big-money contracts, and the colorful personalities of coaches and players collide, and winners and losers emerge. This insightful account is evidence of how much basketball has--and hasn't--changed since 1979, before the money really started rolling in. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Among the best books ever written on professional basketball." The Philadelphia Inquirer David Halberstam, best-selling author of THE FIFTIES and THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST, turns his keen reporter's eye on the sport of basketball -- the players and the coaches, the long road trips, what happens on court, in front of television cameras, and off-court, where no eyes have followed -- until now. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the most famous books about basketball ever written. It captures a unique moment in the history of the NBA. The old Celtic dynasties are over and the Magic/Bird has not yet begun. Halberstam, famous for his Pulitzer Prize winning reporting in Vietnam, follows the Portland Trail Blazers for a whole season. The team two years removed from their championship victory over the Sixers is struggling to survive the loss of the gifted Bill Walton to free agency. The playoffs and even a winning record are not guaranteed. But the real beauty of the book is not the drama of the Portland team but the changing nature of the NBA in general. Halberstam is writing in 1980. He cannot see that Magic and Bird will change the league and make it both popular and profitable. That is part of the beauty of this narrative; it is trapped in time. At the very end of the book, the owner of the San Diego Clippers decides to sell the team because, with Bill Walton injured he cannot make any money. He sells the team to a local real estate agent named Donald Sterling for 13.5 million dollars. This is told without any irony because it was written in 1981. This is the last Halberstam book I will read. I have read just about everything he has written and I was deeply saddened by this death. He has long been one of my favorite authors. But the cadence of his words becomes painfully predictable in this book. I will need a long fast before I can appreciate it again. (less)

The 1977 Portland Trail Blazers were one of the more memorable teams to win a title and then not successfully defend their crown. The squad's unselfishness and team play during its championship run thrilled basketball purists, and many fans across the country believed more championships were on the way for the Blazers. Instead, Portland fell prey to the major pitfalls that can unravel a championship team, and by the third year following their magic season they had a losing record and

barely made the playoffs. Famed author David Halberstam chronicles that 1979-80 season in "The Breaks of the Game." Blazers head coach Jack Ramsay is considered one of the best coaches in the history of the NBA and was later inducted into the Hall of Fame, but he had his work cut out for him in the seasons following the 1977 championship in trying to lead a declining team. Injuries, player selfishness due to no-cut contracts, salary complaints, team chemistry problems, and the diminishment of the power a coach had in regard to his team all made their presence felt in Portland in the late Seventies. Halberstam profiles Ramsay and the important players on the 1979-80 Portland squad in the course of the book, as well as some of the other key figures in the league such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Red Auerbach. Bill Walton meant as much as anyone to the '77 team, and the author recalls how injuries and other struggles led to his falling out with the franchise and departure to San Diego in 1979. The author looks at many issues, some topical and others timeless, that were affecting the NBA in the late Seventies such as race, team chemistry, the business side of pro basketball, drugs, trade and contract rumors, important but unsung players, television and television advertising, and the relationship of college basketball to the pro game. Halberstam describes how the league was in trouble when he wrote, to the extent that the Finals that year between the Lakers and 76ers were tape-delayed, but later in the 1980s the league enjoyed a boom in popularity that finally gained it a wide, enthusiastic following across the country. Longtime followers of the league will note that the problems of NBA overexpansion and the wave of similar, cookie-cutter arenas that Halberstam decried in "Breaks" repeated themselves in the late Eighties and early Nineties. Another constant of the NBA across the decades that Halberstam broaches which overexpansion has just made worse has been that of the top half-dozen or so teams being highly watchable and the bottom half of the league distinctly uninteresting, save for a period in the mid-to-late Eighties when about two-thirds of the teams were compelling. Through Halberstam's description of the ups and downs of an 82-game regular season and one-miniseries-and-done playoff run of a declined team like the 1979-80 Trail Blazers, basketball fans get a more realistic picture of what NBA life is like for most teams than they do by reading one of the many books written about teams that won titles. The forward by Bill Simmons rightly notes that this is one of the best basketball books ever, and "The Breaks of the Game" is one of the premier case studies of how precarious success is for pro basketball teams and how quickly franchises can fall.

I believe this is the greatest sports literary accomplishment of all time. Every paragraph is perfectly constructed as the reader is drawn into the locker room with the Trailblazers, a team with unlimited

potential and unforeseeable complications around every corner. Journalists are not allowed this level of access to athletes anymore. You will see why when reading this book - the relationships are fickle, fragile, and fascinating. Halberstam's unflinching account does not spare anyone from the scrutiny of his honest focus.

This is a typical David Halberstam book in the sense it is meticulously accurate, documented and deeply descriptive of the real characters captured in this insightful story of professional basketball. The comprehensive, very interesting backgrounds of most of the real life personalities within this story are fascinating and engaging. The inclusion of team owners, coaches, trainers, general managers and most of all the players in this evolutionary human drama is a microcosm of our general society as it relates to socioeconomic, business and racial issues of the 70's and 80's. Almost any sports fan would enjoy and be fascinated by reading "The Breaks of the Game".

This work delves deeply into the Portland Trailblazers of the late seventies following their earlier championship season. Not only does it discuss the game of basketball, but it discusses deeply all the pressures felt throughout the team, from renegotiation of contracts to playing identity to second and third order effects of injury. While it may not get super deep into the "X's and O's" of the game of basketball, this work provides a broad view of a very tumultuous season for the blazers. Worth the time to read.

After reading Bill Walton's recent exceptional biography I decided to read this book by Bill's close friend and noted historian, David Halberstam. This book is a little slow for me and much too much information. Frankly it reads like a fan by a historian who didn't know when to stop. Now, if you are a fan of the Portland Tailblazers, of basketball in general in the 70s/80s, this may be your book. But he covers everyone in great detail. Some who just doesn't merit the time or my time to read. A good book, not a great book and difficult to finish in my busy schedule.

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