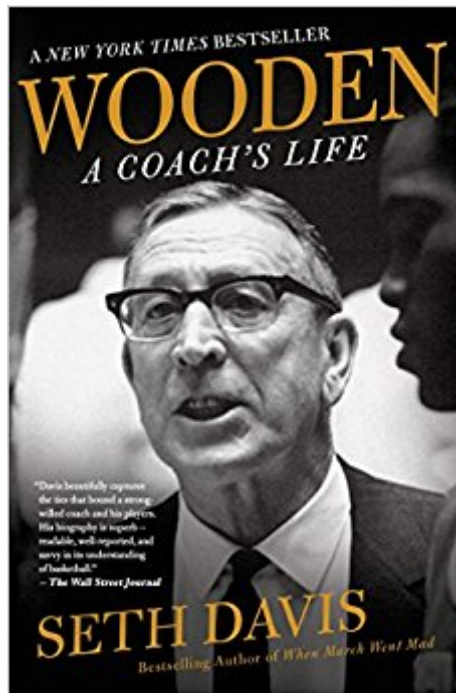




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Wooden: A Coach's Life



Synopsis

A provocative and revelatory new biography of the legendary UCLA coach John Wooden, by one of America's top college basketball writers. No college basketball coach has ever dominated the sport like John Wooden. His UCLA teams reached unprecedented heights in the 1960s and '70s capped by a run of ten NCAA championships in twelve seasons and an eighty-eight-game winning streak, records that stand to this day. Wooden also became a renowned motivational speaker and writer, revered for his "Pyramid of Success." Seth Davis of Sports Illustrated and CBS Sports has written the definitive biography of Wooden, an unflinching portrait that draws on archival research and more than two hundred interviews with players, opponents, coaches, and even Wooden himself. Davis shows how hard Wooden strove for success, from his All-American playing days at Purdue through his early years as a high school and college coach to the glory days at UCLA, only to discover that reaching new heights brought new burdens and frustrations. Davis also reveals how at the pinnacle of his career Wooden found himself on questionable ground with alumni, referees, assistants, and even some of his players. His was a life not only of lessons taught, but also of lessons learned. Woven into the story as well are the players who powered Wooden's championship teams — Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Bill Walton, Walt Hazzard, and others — many of whom speak frankly about their coach. The portrait that emerges from Davis's remarkable biography is of a man in full, whose life story still resonates today.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Although the most successful and one of the best-known college basketball

coaches ever, the late John Wooden is not an easy subject for a biographer. He was a reserved and aloof man, often dull, always a midwesterner despite his many years as coach of the UCLA Bruins. Though a coach of biracial teams during a period of intense racial feelings, Wooden remained above the fray, rarely accused of bigotry, though never a crusader. Similarly, coaching with astounding success throughout the sixties, and having among his athletes the greatly gifted but politically aware and rebellious Bill Walton, Wooden, though frequently at odds with his stars, managed an unprecedented and since unequaled series of championships. By way of interviews with former players and associates, and with the aged Wooden himself, Davis (*When March Went Mad*, 2009) manages to present a balanced portrait of a singular man, deflating the image of Saint John with suggestions of his anger, occasional nastiness (his bench jockeying will be a revelation to those who observed him less closely), the blind eye he turned to overzealous boosters, compulsive orientation to detail, and detachment from athletes who, in some cases, may have craved more paternal attention. Davis has avoided stultifying, game-by-game detail (but does offer genuinely exciting accounts of several key games) and has provided a multidimensional, nearly cradle-to-grave portrait of a highly successful and revered coach and teacher, in the process delivering a history of the evolution of college basketball and profiles of many of its stars. --Mark Levine --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• Mr. Davis beautifully captures the ties that bound a strong-willed coach and his players. His biography is superb--readable, well-reported and savvy in its understanding of basketball. • The Wall Street Journal • Neither a hatchet job nor a hagiography but a meticulously researched and evenhanded assessment. • The New York Times Book Review • Superb . . . Surprising as it seems, Wooden, arguably the most influential coach in basketball history, has never had a definitive biography until now. . . . [Seth Davis] has written a virtual cutaway view of the history and evolution of basketball in the form of a biography. Davis takes us on bus rides over snow-covered roads to Friday-night high school games, puts us in the frantic and precarious whirl of semi-pro basketball barnstorming in the Midwest and, finally, gives us a courtside seat in the high-stakes pressure cooker of big-time college basketball. • Los Angeles Times • Finally, John Wooden has a biography that's worthy of its subject. • Buffalo News • A clear-eyed look at a flawed but extraordinary man. • Dallas Morning News • An unusually rich and illuminating portrait • In this hefty but well-paced account, Sports Illustrated scribe Davis provides entertaining play-by-play and color commentary on Wooden's dynasty-building, key games, and the grueling, authoritarian methods • he used to impart his innovative fast-break system. • Publishers Weekly • [Davis]

has provided a multidimensional, nearly cradle-to-grave portrait of a highly successful and revered coach and teacher, in the process delivering a history of the evolution of college basketball and profiles of many of its stars.

- **Booklist** (starred review) "This is a superb biography, worthy of its subject. With deep research, clear writing, and objective thinking, Seth Davis has cut through the mythology to present John Wooden and his UCLA dynasty in a fresh and compulsively readable way."
- **David Maraniss**, author of *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi* "Wooden: A Coach's Life is a truly remarkable achievement. Seth Davis has produced the most authoritative, comprehensive, and entertaining book ever written on John Wooden. He immerses us in every area of Wooden's life and provides a detailed and rich picture of this complicated and iconic man. I simply couldn't put it down. Wooden is a master work."
- **Jay Bilas**, ESPN college basketball analyst and author of *Toughness* "Relentlessly researched and written with devastating detail and texture, Seth Davis has delivered the definitive biography on the most important figure in college basketball history. There are complexities in the simplicity of Wooden and his UCLA dynasty, and Davis peels back the myths to bring light to the truths. This is Wooden, in full."
- **Adrian Wojnarowski**, author of *The Miracle of St. Anthony* and Yahoo Sports NBA columnist "Who knew that John Wooden was a pool shark? That's just one of the many fascinating revelations in Seth Davis's insightful bio of the man who remains the gold standard for basketball coaches. No one needed humanizing more than the Wizard, and Seth figured out how to do it. Goodness gracious sakes alive (as Wooden would say), this is a terrific book."
- **Jack McCallum**, author of the New York Times bestseller *Dream Team*

This book gives a good balanced account of his life (as it should) but I was hoping it would also provide more of his philosophy and methods that made him successful on the court. I found that "Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court" is a good companion to this book. Reading the biography first gives you a perspective you wouldn't have otherwise when reading the "philosophy of Wooden" in the smaller book. The reflections book provides some of what I felt was incomplete in the biography in terms of the Wooden Philosophy. For example, the pyramid is printed in the biography, but isn't really explained at all. Hearing in his own words how he developed the pyramid and what it meant to him was important to really understanding the man in my thinking.

I did not have high expectations for this book. I knew Seth Davis' writing through SI and saw his commentary on CBS sports. Having finished the book today, I proclaim it not only one of the best

sports books or biographies I have read but one of the best books period. The coach's life is both solidly reported and emotionally resonant. It is laudatory and balanced at the same time. I was a big fan of the Bruins as a child. Bill Walton is my favorite sports figure. I like dynasties and am not really for the underdog. Of course Coach Wooden had the players of a generation, but he also won with small lineups. Davis praises the teaching ability of Coach Wooden, but on personal relationships with players the Coach comes up short. Wooden is not really a wizard, he is a vulnerable human in the vortex of the greatest sports domination in history. I was fascinated by his relationship with J.D. Morgan, and Davis pulls no punches on the influence of Sam Gilbert. The portrayal of an aging Wooden in physical decline is touching and nuanced. On the eve of the NCAA men's basketball championship, I am going directly to the Davis book on Magic and Larry.

A very thoroughly researched and well-written biography about a basketball coach who was "The Man" in college basketball when I came along. I loved discovering that Coach Wooden was, indeed, quite human like the rest of us and not always the angelic example that the press and basketball elite would have you believe during his days on the bench. I was very intrigued by the way he coached and developed relationships with his players. Although he chose to be more of a father than a friend to his players, he was able to effectively combine that innate Midwestern discipline with a flexibility that was particularly needed during the '60s and '70s when societal changes proliferated. And while I enjoyed the many chapters that focused on the talented players he continued to bring to UCLA -- from Walt Hazzard and Gail Goodrich through the Walton Gang years -- the essence of Coach Wooden was captured best in the closing chapters when you saw the respect that he earned from virtually all of his former players, even from those with whom he had serious conflicts during their playing days. This Duke University author did quite well (sometimes hard for a UNC-CH graduate to admit)!

Thought the book was well researched and probably pretty accurate in terms of his life, but also felt it was looking for the negative side of Wooden throughout his life. Not sure if anyone was under that kind of microscope would come out totally clean. Not saying that Wooden was perfect and he had his faults, but in general he was a person of high morals and tried to live them daily with the people he dealt with both in coaching and life. As a coach myself, you will always have people who thought they should have played more or got a bad deal from you and you have to learn to live with it. I think in most cases Wooden was fair to those who played for him and generally looked at the team over the individual when coaching. Since his impact seemed to be so long standing on many of those

he coached, he must have influenced many of them more than they thought. Have read almost every book on Wooden and this did bring some new light to who he was and how he coached and lived. All I know, is that I wrote him once and I live in Ireland and he wrote me back. He didn't know me and yet he responded with kindness and concern. Speaks pretty highly of him I think!

This is the third book I have about John Wooden, the other two were written by him. One explaining how to become the best person you can be and the other was directed more for young adults to introduce them to his rules on life and the pyramid of success. I bought the second one for one of my grandson's to enjoy, but his older brother just fell in love with it (he kept a copy of the pyramid on the front of his school binder, written by himself, for a whole year!) So, growing up in the high desert in California from 69-73, I fell in love with UCLA basketball and especially became attached to the Walton gang. I really had no idea this book would have the effect on me that it did. With a little imagination, I felt as if I was there, experiencing Wooden's life as it unfolded on the pages in front of me. All the warts and all, making him come to life and showing what a great teacher he was at basketball, and at life. It is as complete of a picture of a man as one can get. If anyone wants to know the rest of story of John Wooden, then this is the book for you. And it's nice to see the direct lineage from Naismith, to Wooden's coaches, to Wooden himself. You get to experience basketball from its' beginning to what the modern game has become. It's a fascinating look at the history of basketball as well as the lifetime of John Wooden.

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