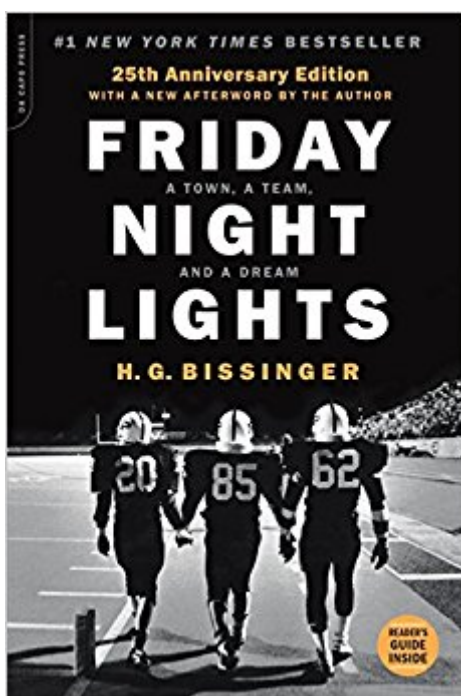


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Friday Night Lights, 25th Anniversary Edition: A Town, A Team, And A Dream



Synopsis

The 25th anniversary edition of the #1 New York Times bestseller and Sports Illustrated's best football book of all time, with a new afterword by the author. Return once again to the timeless account of the Permian Panthers of Odessa—the winningest high-school football team in Texas history. Socially and racially divided, Odessa isn't known to be a place big on dreams, but every Friday night from September to December, when the Panthers play football, dreams can come true. With frankness and compassion, H. G. Bissinger unforgettably captures a season in the life of Odessa and shows how single-minded devotion to the team shapes the community and inspires—and sometimes shatters—the teenagers who wear the Panthers' uniforms.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bissinger spent 1988 with his wife and children in Odessa, Tex., principally following the high-school football team, but also observing life in this dusty, unsophisticated town. This is his superb, if disquieting, portrait of heartland America as he found it. For Odessa residents, the Permian Panthers, consistently contenders--and sometimes victors--in the state championship tournament for 30 years have become a virtual religion, although most of the townspeople are also bona fide churchgoers. After graduation, the teenagers on the team, most of whom are not well enough endowed to go on to college or pro ball, take their place among the other good ole boys at the Boosters Club, where they can recall their glory days together. 75,000 first printing; \$100,000 ad/promo. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1988, Bissinger, a Pulitzer Prize-winning Philadelphia Inquirer editor, left his job to spend a year with a high school sports team. The sport he picked was football, the location, the depressed West Texas oil town of Odessa, called by Larry McMurtry "the worst town on earth." Here 20,000 fans turn out regularly to watch their Permian Panthers win. Here there is no high-blown talk of playing the game well; just the raw need to win at all costs. In this atmosphere, players vomit from nervousness before each game and often play with injuries. On the few occasions when the team suffers a loss, the coach's front lawn sprouts "For Sale" signs. Bissinger makes you feel the tensions of the kids, who are not just playing a game, but literally fighting for the honor of their town. He also accomplishes the more difficult feat of making the team's rabid fans sympathetic. His language sometimes verges on the overblown, but it does echo the mythical proportions of the game and a season that will render the rest of the players' lives a dull denouement. Fascinating even for those, or maybe especially for those, with no interest in football.- Nora Rawlinson, "Library Journal"Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I had never seen either the movie or the television show, and frankly don't remember how I stumbled across this book. I wanted something different and thought provoking to read during my vacation, and this book did not disappoint. I couldn't put it down. I was never a jock in high school, nor was I particularly interested in sports until well into my adult years when I developed an appreciation for football. I now enjoy following both my Big Ten college team as well as a select few professional football teams. Rather than being a glorification of high school football jocks and their rabid fan following, this book is clearly a zeitgeist of Texas High School football, not only in the 1980's but, more than likely, currently as well. Told with clear, honest rhetoric, this work of non-fiction accurately represents the history of the Permian High School Football team from Odessa TX during their 1988 season. As the reader, I felt both the euphoria of their wins as well as the anxiousness of the coaches and players in striving to take their talented team all the way to a state championship. What was particularly interesting in the book was the history of high school football in this town/region/state that Bissinger so clearly describes, with no judgement or criticism on his part. Not a good book choice for those looking for the "Hollywood" version of the story, it is an excellent read that, taken in its originally published context, would have been better suited for a documentary. Even those who are not football fans would enjoy this book

I thought this was a great read. It is not like the movie at all which is a drama/fictional representation of the people in the book. The book really highlights what was and is still wrong with high school football. As a non-native Texan in Texas, it was fascinating to read a lot of the history and struggles of West Texas towns and the cyclic nature of the oil industry. To a great extent, high school football in Texas was driven by the socio-economic conditions created around different oil booms - this book covers that from an inside perspective. Even though this was originally written in the late 80's it could have easily been written today. I could not put it down.

I devoured this book. The writing style is smart, quick and comes across as a person living in the city he profiled (which he did). It's unfortunate the things that are uncovered in this book regarding how much corruption goes on to keep the football team winning. The good thing about this book is that while it reveals how s***ty high school football truly is, the author doesn't paint the town, teachers, coaches, parents and students as awful. Rather they are presented as being caught up in something bigger than themselves, which in a way they are. I imagine that the majority of people involved with the football program wouldn't stand for most of the things that happened, but when you put them together, collectively their conscience is lost and the only thing that matters is winning. I would recommend this book to anyone, whether they like sports or not.

Great read. Writer does come across a bit too liberal while visiting a rural area. I can see how the community felt somewhat taken back by this book. I think he did a good job, but included a few liberal jabs that seemed out of place in the story.

After reading Friday Night Lights, I certainly understand why the author may have felt trepidation in going back to Odessa Texas because he doesn't pull any punches. One will just have to gather all the evidence on whether he misquoted people or potentially did worse and make up their own mind. I think what is clear is that this football team was a glorified institution for this town that often did not have much to cheer about sometimes. At the end of the day, it is a very human story of a longing for something greater than the previous generation had or wanting something greater for yourself. Yeah the town comes across as prejudiced (in a most charitable reading) and the football team more like an athletic cult of sorts that shapes and molds people to the institution and leaves them wandering after it tosses them out after senior year. But wrapped in all this, are the very human elements that are striving for something better and see it in this jewel in the rough of a football team. In sum, Friday Night Lights is a quick read that goes way beyond football to

say something about the human condition.

This book is ostensibly a chronicle of the football season of the Permian high school football team in 1988 but it's really more of a journalistic and sociological x-ray of the small town of Odessa, Texas and its numerous problems and conflicts, ranging from the athletic to the racial to the economic. Bissinger moved into the football-crazed town and closely observed the season, walking away with tons of insight and observations on the American character from this one small town. Throughout most of the book, football plays a role as a filter through which almost everything else passes, from racial animosities to academic performance and discipline issues in school. It even influences the family relationships of many of the people described. The book is something of a classic and considered one of the best sports books of all time, which is ironic because while reading the book, despite the structure being beholden to the unfolding football season and ensuing playoff games, it's the people and the life of the town that the book seems really to be about, and not so much the football games. They're ever-present, exerting their influence - some good, some bad - on everything but they're not the point. This is a work of journalism with a football theme that's just one theme among many others.

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