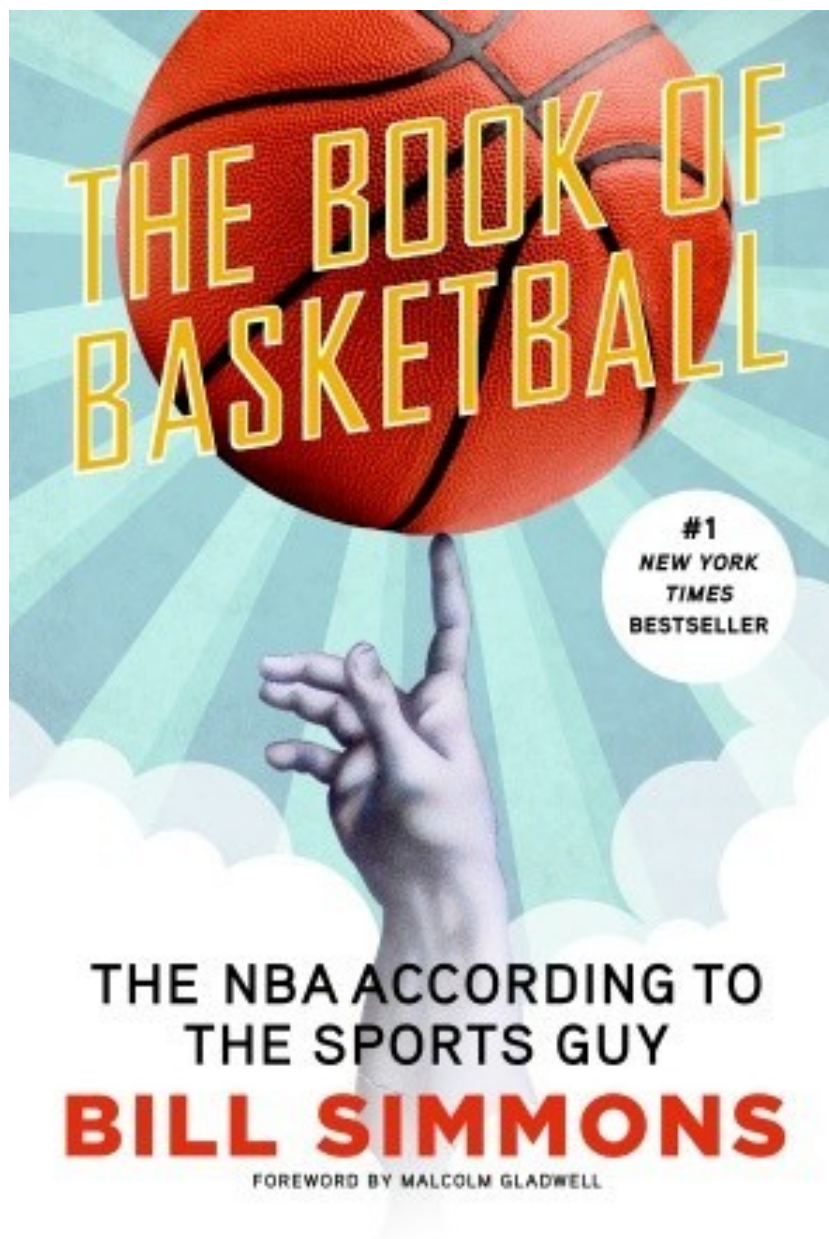


The Book of Basketball: The NBA According to The Sports Guy Book PDF Download



By:
Bill Simmons

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William Johnson

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The Sports Guy (aka Bill Simmons) is an engaging, Internet personality. He previously wrote a book that was a collection of his highly successful and entertaining Internet postings regarding his beloved Red Sox. Any fan of Simmons knows that he is a rabid Boston sports fanatic, most notably the Celtics and Red Sox. If there is any weakness to his writing it is that he is insanely biased to those Boston teams. When approaching topics from a fan perspective

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The sad thing about The Book of Basketball is that it is Simmons gargantuan attempt at putting the NBA in perspective by ranking the all-time greatest teams and players for most of its length. When Simmons focuses on fan experiences or the love of the game he excels. The book starts out this way and is highly engaging. The prologue may be about his beloved Celtics but it describes his attendance at games, his joy at watching some of the greatest players play and sharing those experiences with his father. The next chapter focuses on "The Secret"™, a concept Isiah Thomas explained to him about winning. Since the concept is something Simmons and the reader can remember and has (or currently is) witnessed/witnessing, the concept and portrayal in the book is equally as engaging as the opening, heart felt prologue.

The problem is the "objective"™ analysis sections. A majority of the book is a breakdown of the 96 greatest players of all time (separated into five levels, the top being the Pantheon). This is all fine and dandy until you realize almost every Celtic ever known is on this list. I can't particularly argue with it (as my friend and SI contributor Tony points out "they did dominate basketball for multiple decades) but while the Celtic players get almost heavenly like bios, other players come

under scrutiny and "but they had this problem". . . kind of analysis that makes you wonder if you are reading a "Greatest" list or a "Great but. . ." list. The nastiest trick is that Simmons pretends to be unbiased by placing his beloved Larry Bird as #5 all time behind hypothetical rival Magic Johnson (#4) and real enemy Kareem Abdul Jabbar (#3). He even references, verbatim, "see, I'm not a homer. . . I put Magic 4th!". But then he puts Bill Russell as #2. Despite the dominance of the man (and a respect I equally share with the author) there is no way the dude is #2 all time! Simmons even spends hundreds of pages describing how pre-merger NBA players wouldn't stand a chance against post-merger NBA players. . . so how could Russell, a player from the 60s who had virtually no competition at his position and faced fewer (and less talented) teams be placed so high? Because he's a Celtic damn it. . . that's why.

The worst offender is the Greatest Teams section which is also heavily dominated by Celtics teams. I'm not saying Celtics teams from different eras don't deserve credit but placing the 1986 Boston Celtics over the 1996 Chicago Bulls as the greatest team of all time is just plain blasphemy. And I'd like to say Simmons uses great research to back up his decision but when the only thing he can come up with is "the Bulls struggled in the playoffs" (they went 15-3) and "the Sonics, with no bench, won 67 that year. . . that season was a joke", I'm not really buying the argument. He derides the players on the bench (Luc Longley, Jud Beuchler, etc) as not holding a candle to Boston's Hall of Famers. Duh? Those "losers" on the bench won 72 games and defended their title two more times. The '86 Celtics won 60-odd games and didn't even defend the title the following year (which he chalks up to injuries and Len Bias' death. Great piled it on the dead guy! Plus he says injuries are part of the game in one section but uses it as his major defense in this section). Something tells me the Bulls won more with less and did it better. Keep in mind. . . I'm an Orlando Magic fan. I got swept in the '96 Eastern Finals by that Bulls team.

This kind of writing suits the Internet but not a 700 page book meant to be the end-all be-all of basketball info. I picked this book up looking for excellent analysis and unbiased opinions: looked like I picked the wrong guy. Since Simmons is an Internet writer first with a gimmick (the fan's perspective) I gave him a pass. But over 400 pages of "objective" analysis is pushing it. The book does have a "you've worn out your welcome" feel to it. The four hundred mark would have been fine but this book gets old after you start entering the 600 page area. Simmons is known for his humorous footnotes and pop culture references but they also overdue there welcome. While I enjoyed the experience overall, I think it would have behooved the Internet writer to make his first foray into book writing be less gargantuan and interested mainly in his gimmick/expertise. I never could trust Simmons for objectivity before and I certainly can't trust him now.

Joe

Ultimately, a pretty disappointing book. As a big fan of the Sports Guy's columns about the NBA, I thought I would be laughing from beginning to end and learning a lot. Neither turned out to be true. By expanding upon the worst parts of his columns - his obsessive biases towards certain types of players and teams - and mostly ignoring the profound insight he usually incites with his biting humor, Simmons comes off as someone who spent too much time watching pro basketball and now can do nothing

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It's clear that Simmons has thrived online due to the work of his editors in corralling his babbling and refining his humor. The supposedly hilarious footnotes in this book consist of nothing but bad porn star humor, bad 80's movie humor, and Simmons making jokes about how he can't stop making porn star and drug jokes. It is to our great benefit that ESPN keeps this boorish immaturity out of his columns. I began glazing over them about halfway through the book. I thought, perhaps, that I was just on Sports Guy overload, but I kept reading his columns online while I read this book, and they continued to make me chortle. By the last section, "the best teams ever," I was skipping pages entirely, as it was obvious that Simmons was just blasting out whatever it took to prove his favorite team of all time, the '86 Celtics, were also the best team of all time.

You could pick apart this book's rhetoric from many different angles, but I think it can be nicely summarized by saying that Bill Simmons is a second rate writer who, because of the popularity of his humor and his honest insights, has been tricked into thinking he is in the upper echelon. The best parts of this book are when Bill quotes other writers. But just because you hang out with Malcolm Gladwell and Chuck Klosterman (and get them to contribute amazing passages to your tome of rants) doesn't mean you can keep up with them on the page.

Doug Stotland

If you're a huge NBA fan, a guy, are between the ages 40 and 48 (as of 2012) and have watched an insane amount of TV and movies this is a no-brainer 5 star book(1). Otherwise I don't think you'll like it.

I haven't enjoyed a book this much in a very long time. Malcom Gladwell nails it in the forward here he says Bill Simmons is what you would be if you had endless hours to devote to being a fan. Bill Simmons is hilarious + his love of the NBA and his ability to create analogies from random stuff

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I haven't enjoyed a book this much in a very long time. Malcom Gladwell nails it in the forward here he says Bill Simmons is what you would be if you had endless hours to devote to being a fan. Bill Simmons is hilarious + his love of the NBA and his ability to create analogies from random stuff (mostly movies and TV shows) that I love gave me great joy. I've seen other people criticize B.S. for his lack of objectivity in compiling his rankings. It didn't bother me. B.S.'s excruciatingly detailed arguments and justifications for each ranking were mostly ingenious, interesting and often hilarious. The book opens with a love letter to the Celtics and then he proceeds to claim he's objective for the ensuing 750 pages(2). But he is a homer and that's part of what makes the book such a joy to read. Seeing the game through his eyes makes it difficult not to love the NBA more(3).

I'll spoil it for you cause there's no suspense: Russel was better than Chamberlain and the 85 Celtics were better than the 96 Bulls (4).

(1) I'm considering it for my sports book pantheon. Definitely better than Halbertsam's breaks of the game, which, ironically, would be sacrilege for B.S.

(2) citing his ranking Magic Johnson 1 spot above Larry Bird as definitive proof that he's not a homer.

(3) I almost had to go double negative I was so excited about this observation.

(4) Claiming anyone other than the 96 Bulls was the best team in the history of the NBA is definitive proof that B.S. is a total homer.

Paul Mcleod

When Chuck Klosterman and, of all intellectual giants, Bill Walton can destroy the theoretical foundation of your 700-page book's analysis in ten pages worth of cameos...well, it's probably asking too much for you to admit that you wasted the last two years of your life and start over from scratch, but that's probably what you should do. The Book of Basketball works alright as entertainment, though the expanded license for dick jokes fails to enhance Simmons' humor much, but as a work of analysis

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Most every potentially interesting position Simmons takes depends on just-so stories or special pleading or just plain circular logic. The Bill Russell vs Wilt Chamberlain chapter has been widely deplored, and rightfully so. I became viscerally angry as I read it. Most of the player-ranking section is less maddening, but the bit at the end in which Simmons ranks the top teams in NBA history sets our teeth to gritting once more. A more accurate and less risible version would've been called "Top NBA teams that Bill Simmons enjoyed watching or, having not been alive to see them, enjoys the idea of watching." Not a very interesting list, sure, but at least it would have been honestly labelled.

Nothing is as dumb as the Isiah Thomas / "The Secret" story, though (no, not that Secret. It's a different Secret that applies only to the NBA). He'd teased the story in his column for years, and I was fully prepared to have my mind blown. And then it turns out to be a fairly uneventful conversation between three minor celebrities about the fake almost-fight that two of them had, which culminates in the earth-rending revelation that BASKETBALL IS A TEAM SPORT. I could see how, if you were Bill Simmons, this whole episode might have seemed a bit surreal, but to a third party it's not that astonishing at all.

Or at least Simmons lacks the ability, even though he strains, to convey the surreality and astonishment to we the reading third parties. And that's the main problem: Bill Simmons is at best a competent writer. He's agreeably conversational for the most part, and he has excellent comic timing (although if you've read many of his columns you can anticipate his rhythms as they unfold by now), but eliciting emotional responses is beyond him and has always been. So is producing prose that is a pleasure to read just for its construction (a rare gift, sure, but one that Klosterman possesses so obviously that his one-page passage makes the text around it seem little but a vast

ashen wasteland). Simmons knows this, and apologizes for it frequently, but the best apology would have been to abstain from mediocrity in the first place.

Andrew

It's incredibly entertaining at best, infuriating and a drunken digression at others. Simmons views himself as an expert, and that comes through on every page - whether in his decision that John Stockton played in era of "inflated assists" or his condemnation of the last twenty minutes of NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN. He's just not that smart, frankly. In both cases, he makes specious claims and then moves on to more specious claims or backs them up with statistics that are supposed to be taken at fac

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The most embarrassing section is early, when he reveals "The Secret." Spoiler alert: the secret is that championship teams rely on teamwork, not individual superstars. Wooah!!! I've never heard that before! Oh, except I have - my T-Ball coach told me that when we just assumed that we would win every game with the help of this skinny, white-headed kid named Kevin Geshke who hit solo home runs every time he walked to the tee (we did, thus disproving Simmons thesis). But Simmons dedicates pages and pages to a point that my Grandmother understood, without attempting to figure out the groups who disproved that (the '06 Heat for instance, or the early 00's Lakers).

Simmons ranking of players is arbitrary and ultimate critic-proof, but he finds a way to take pot-shots at the players he doesn't like (like Stockton and Clyde Drexler) and elevates those he does on revisionist history (like Allen Iverson).

The best part, and what it makes it ultimately worth reading for the ardent NBA fan, is his "What if" section: when he takes episodes from NBA History and wonders what would have happened if the ball had swung a different way: what if Len Bias hadn't died and the Celtics had an extra big man in the late 80s? what if Jordan got drafted by Portland?

Still, while entertaining, it's pretty maddening.