

Baseball Great

Tim Green

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Baseball is the one subject Josh knows in mind, body, and soul. Having been recently given the nickname “Baseball Great” by the school newspaper, Josh is anticipating an incredible baseball season and a better rest of the school year to come. Then, his father is unexpectedly released from his position as the local minor league’s baseball team’s pitcher and becomes the VP of sales for the city’s distinguished youth baseball team, The Titans. He also pulls Josh out of the school’s baseball team, where Josh’s talents are desperately needed to play for the Titans instead. However, when Josh’s dad recruits the school’s star pitcher Esch to the Titan’s secondary team, Josh’s fellow classmates are furious at being robbed a possible state championship win, and they are pinning the blame on Josh. Caught in the complicated world of professional baseball, Josh does not know how to respond to these mixed blessings being flung in his way.

Having inadvertently become the school pariah and the baseball team’s verbal punching bag, all that Josh can do now is to focus on the game he knows best- baseball. Partly for himself and partly for his father, Josh accepts the grueling practices and repulsive nutrition shakes required of every Titans’ player in hopes of truly becoming a “Baseball Great.” The opportunity to become a star comes even closer when Josh secures the victory in a baseball game against the biggest contender for that year’s Junior Olympics. However, when a teammate surreptitiously hands Josh the secret “gym candy,” which is confirmed to be steroids attained from the coach himself, Josh is uncertain of how he should proceed. How far is he willing to go to become a baseball star and is he willing to jeopardize his values to save his father’s job?

Baseball Great by Tim Green that presents baseball in a way that captures the excitement in the game and depicts it without any obscure baseball terms, but as the same time, without oversimplifying the subject either. Therefore, the book that it can be understood and thoroughly enjoyed by anyone, not just by baseball enthusiasts. In addition, the cast of characters are diverse in their personalities and roles in the story. Furthermore, Green has given them qualities of realistic people; their actions and the language used truly reflect the age and type of person Green portrays them as. Furthermore, the story is well-paced and the scenes are balanced between school and the playing field. Even though the scenes overlap slightly, they mainly follow their own plots, but when the plots do cross over, they are able to be juxtaposed, and illuminate the development occurring within the plots. It combines an athlete’s perspective with that of a normal pre-teen’s to incorporate action, humor, and suspense.

Although *Baseball Great* does have its strong points, this sports-themed book suffers from redundancy, with the main character overcoming adversities an either at home or at school to claim success. However, the actual details in the plot are given in a way that manages to keep readers interested. Even though the book probably geared towards kids, I highly recommend this book to anyone keen on sports. The main reading audience should be middle school students since the main characters are of that age, and this book is by no means too complex too understand. Similar books that would appeal to those who enjoyed *Baseball Great* include *Hidden Talents* by David Lubar, *The Batboy* by Mike Lupica, *The Ranger's Apprentice* by John A. Flanagan, *H.I.V.E.* by Mark Walden, and *Kickoff!* by Kiki Barber.