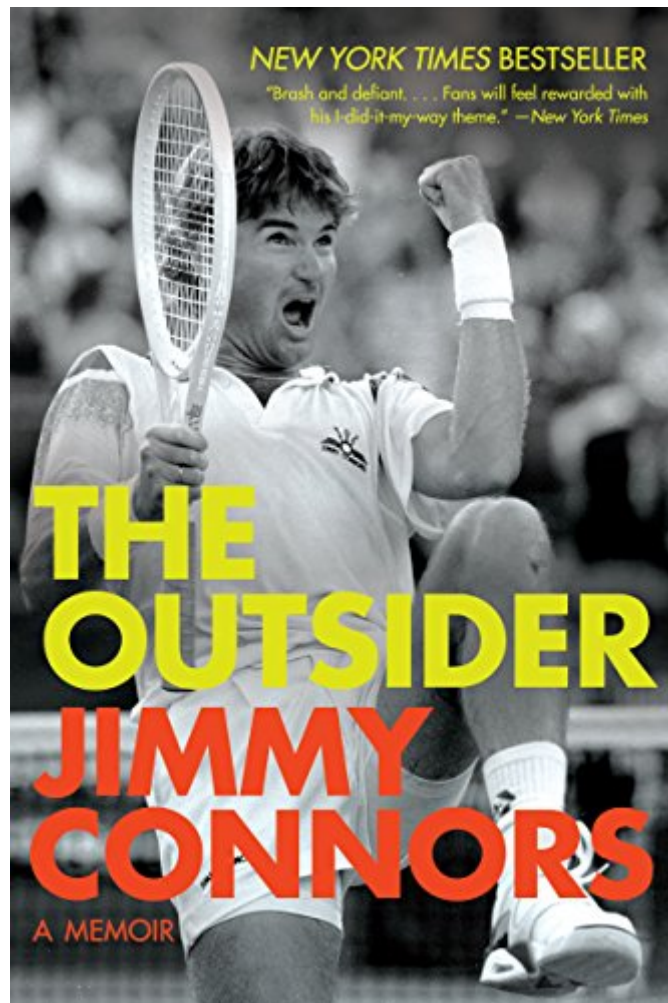


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The Outsider: A Memoir



Synopsis

The Outsider is a no-holds-barred memoir by the original bad boy of tennis, Jimmy Connors. Connors ignited the tennis boom in the 1970s with his aggressive style of play, turning his matches with John McEnroe, Bjorn Borg, and Ivan Lendl into prizefights. But it was his prolonged dedication to his craft that won him the public's adoration. He capped off one of the most remarkable runs in tennis history at the age of 39 when he reached the semifinals of the 1991 U.S. Open, competing against players half his age. More than just the story of a tennis champion, The Outsider is the uncensored account of Connors's life, from his complicated relationship with his formidable mother and his storybook romance with tennis legend Chris Evert, to his battles with gambling and fidelity that threatened to derail his career and his long-lasting marriage to Playboy playmate Patti McGuire. When he retired from tennis twenty years ago, Connors all but disappeared from public view. In The Outsider, he is back at the top of his game, and as feisty, outspoken, and defiant as ever. This autobiography includes original color photographs from the author.

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Customer Reviews

It's a damn good book written by an all time damn great athlete. Movie material. History. Hollywood movie stars, icons, wine, women, gambling and song. At it's core is a story of a journey to the top paved by a wager his mom waged; she groomed Connors from the age of 5 to be the tennis version of a martial arts warrior. If you followed @JimmyConnors' career you've witnessed him come perilously close to death only to snatch the stake from his would-be assassin's hands. It was true on the court and in his personal life. As much as Connors valued every trophy he won, until they grow arms to hug him they pale in comparison to his wife and kids. It's all in the book. Where does Connor rank as a tennis player? The skinny: he was ranked #1 five years in a row and in 8 different years; in top 3 for 13 straight years; won a record 109 ATP tournaments; he won grand slams on every surface. You value quality over quantity? Connors beat all time greats on clay, grass and hard courts in the finals of grand slams: Borg on clay at the US Open; McEnroe on grass at Wimbledon; and Lendl on hard court at the US Open. Had Connors played all the slams in his prime and had they been surfaced like they are now I'd bet my house that Connors wins 18-22 of them. Apples to Apple: Connors won 109 ATP titles, Federer won 91. Had Federer beat Nadal in the finals at the French Open he'd have come closer to equalling Connors all-around-play genius. If my life is on the line and you're flipping the coin to decide the surface the match is played on, I want Connors playing that match for me for one simple reason: It's my best hope for survival. The great baseline ground-stroker had an all court game as evidenced by his doubles grand slams. Connors' biggest sin might have been his longevity. Yes, it, along with his attitude and never give up spirit, helped lift tennis to a sport viewed by the masses, but it also caused John McEnroe to start wielding a racket with a billboard-size head and sweet-spot just to keep up with the resurgent Connors in 1984. That sea change in pro tennis enabled less skilled taller one dimensional players to be more competitive. Suddenly, you could be less accurate with your swing and shots. Connors second rise to the top following his marriage "sabbatical" led to his two greatest rivals throwing in the towel in different ways: McEnroe switched to a gigantic racket with training wheels on it and Bjorn Borg retired young and left a good looking tennis-corpse and myth. Connors was the man. Thanks to video tape, the record book and his autobiography "The Outsider" he won't be the forgotten man.---

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This memoir blindsided me, far more open and revealing a book than I expected from Jimmy Connors, someone who by his own admission tends to be wary of people and not given to personal revelations. Yet somehow he manages to be surprisingly open in The Outsider, all without softening his edgy personality or blunt take on life. It was fascinating to read of the journey Connors took to

move "tennis from those gated country clubs to the streets." This struggle was part of what made him an outsider (his temperament was another part of that), unwilling to accept the status quo. He wanted to reach out to the average person and change the image of tennis. He was willing to buck the system even if he offended the "old-school fans" who perceived him as "a crude upstart trampling their precious traditions." The Outsider deftly straddles a fine line, balancing personal information (a romance with Chris Evert, tensions with John McEnroe, a crisis in his marriage) with details about tennis history, technique, and pivotal championships. Although he wasn't above seeking revenge, there were sections in the book when Connors gave credit to players who disliked him. He even calls Arthur Ashe's win over him at Wimbledon in 1975 "flawless". Although Connors went into that game injured, with hairline fractures in a shin, he doesn't use that as an excuse for his loss. Even in the first few chapters, it becomes clear that Connors overcame plenty to become a tennis champion. But he also had some incredible role models. One of those was his mother. When he was only 8 years old he saw her get punched in the mouth by a couple of thugs at a public tennis court. Even though she was injured so badly she lost her teeth, she still got up and practiced tennis with her two sons the next morning. What Connors witnessed left him with a permanent anger and drive. His mother also taught him how to harness and use those emotions to his advantage on the tennis court. She was criticized harshly by some members of the press for her involvement in her son's life. But Connors gives her due credit for playing a pivotal role, a living example for him of the mental toughness needed to become a tennis champion. Perhaps her example helped him find the perseverance needed to win matches right after serious injuries. I was particularly moved when reading the poignant chapter focused on friend and fellow player Vitas Gerulaitis. His untimely death at age 40 stunned Connors. I was near tears as I read the details Connors shared about Gerulaitis, their friendship, and accomplishments. It was a friendship that endured even as Gerulaitis struggled with a serious cocaine habit. I'm not a huge tennis buff (although I made a point of watching Connors play whenever possible) and yet I couldn't stop reading this memoir. Connors seems to exemplify his belief that "It's not what you accomplish; it's what you overcome to accomplish it that sets you apart."

This was an easy read yet I am confused about some negative reviews. Connors is who he is and I have no problem with that. I don't recall being a huge fan of his until he staged those remarkable U.S. Open battles at 39. That's how it is with some sports figures. You dislike them for their brashness but you support them in the twilight of their careers. Most of the negative reviews of this book dealt with Connors' personality. People don't like Connors so they don't like the book and

that's ridiculous. It reminds me of the time I saw the movie Raging Bull and I wanted to stand up and yell at Robert DeNiro for acting like such an a-hole when, in reality, he was playing Jake LaMotta to a T. That's how it is with Connors. Love him or hate him, he appears to reveal everything about himself in the book and that's a good thing. The details of his matches and the breaks from the tennis establishment were well worth reading and it appears he has settled into being a family man at this stage of his life. He guilt over the much-too-soon death of good friend Vitus Gerulaitis is sincere as is his love for his wife and children. A welcome addition for anyone remotely interested in tennis.

I like reading about someone's life. This is this kind of bk. It's about his life, not just tennis. It's interesting, very! Horrible what he witnessed as a child, when his mother was hurt! I'm sure this affected him for his whole life and has alot to do with how he was and is. You can't just let go of something like that! That he chose to mention what he about Evert, well, that's a big part of his life, and if it did happen, it affected him alot! Maybe forever. He's lucky to have met his wife, who really stuck with him, and probally taught him alot about love and forgiveness. Brave book to have written!

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