

Sports books don't always score winning point

Let's get one thing straight right away: I hate reading books! One might assume a writer would actually enjoy reading, but for



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this guy, I'd much rather spend my time listening to Yoko Ono's greatest hits than scan the words of "a real page-turner."

Every once in a while, however, I find it impossible to escape the evil, evil book industry — this special

issue being one instance.

So, when forced to read, I go to the old fallback — sports.

Sadly, many sports books don't

work. The "how to" aspect never really teaches. The "how I did it" approach sometimes comes off as an ego trip or, worse yet, a sob story.

And buying into those "the story so-and-so did not want told" books is a even more of a joke. The only reason those books get published is because the writer wants a big paycheck. Worse yet, the only thing that suffers more than the sports icon's image is the reader's integrity.

On Tuesday, Amazon.com's sports best sellers were "The Science of Hitting" by Ted Williams, "It's Not About the Bike" by Lance Armstrong and "You Cannot Be Serious" by John McEnroe.

Foremost, let's be honest with ourselves and cross Williams' "Hitting" off the list immediately. Sure, he was a great batter, and it's sad that he's no longer with us. But if the secrets to getting a base hit in the major leagues were in that book, we'd all

be playing pro ball, not donating money to the "Keep Ted's Body Frozen So We Can Sell His DNA to the Highest Bidder" fund.

Armstrong's "Bike" sounds interesting, doesn't it? I mean, if it's not about the bike, it must be about what an amazing specimen of an athlete he is.

I don't like judging books by their covers, but reading a book about a guy who wins bicycle races is even less exciting than watching the bike races themselves — if that is at all possible.

Now, on to the real winner: Mac's "Serious."

This bad boy of tennis spoke his mind on the court and now, we get a chance to see what the hell he was thinking. Better yet, however, is the controversy. Mac tells it how he saw it, which prompted his former wife to go on national television and defend her character. Now

that's entertainment.

If you've got the time this summer, check out these books:

- "Sacred Hoops," by Phil Jackson. He's a little out there, but he's doing something right. Find out the first-hand details from the "Zen Master."

- "The Minority Quarterback," by Ira Berkow. A Pulitzer-Prize winning sports columnist, Berkow looks at oddities in sports — from Michael Jordan to other, less glamorous lives. The book tells many stories, so if you don't dig one, go to the next.

- "You Gotta Play Hurt," by Dan Jenkins. A fictitious piece about a middle-aged magazine sports columnist who gets paid too much and knows it. The story chronicles many sports, including the weary Winter Olympics and offers insight into college football's little black

bag. Yes, I actually read this book, and I strongly recommend it. It's a bit hard to find, so good luck.

Contact the sports editor at bradschmidt@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Today's crossword solution

S	C	A	M	P	A	P	A	S	F	L	A	T
T	O	R	I	E	G	R	E	T	A	E	R	O
O	M	I	T	D	A	I	S	I	N	I	C	E
W	E	S	T	V	I	R	G	I	N	I	A	
S	T	E	E	L	R	E	N	T	A	L	S	
		N	A	S	A	L	R	I	V	E	T	
A	D	S	D	O	M	E	S	T	I	C	I	T
M	Y	T	H	A	M	A	I	N	S	A	H	L
P	L	A	Y	S	P	O	S	S	U	M	N	E
H	A	R	D	Y	H	I	T	I	T			
I	N	T	E	N	S	E	R	E	A	L	M	
		P	E	N	N	S	Y	L	V	A	N	I
C	O	C	A	A	D	I	E	U	B	I	N	D
B	L	U	R	P	O	L	A	R	A	S	E	A
S	I	E	E	K	S	W	O	R	E	G	E	R

You can learn from history

Yeah, it's summer. Yeah, you want to stop studying. But there are still great reads in the history aisle. Sit back. You may learn something.

One book I highly recommended is "Lenin's Tomb," by David Remnick. Remnick, now an editor at the New Yorker, was a bureau reporter in Moscow for The Washington Post in the waning days of the Cold War.

Remnick took a look at all aspects of Soviet life throughout the nation's fall, and he chronicles events from the earth-shattering (Gorbachev's revelation of a Soviet massacre of Polish troops in 1940) to the ironic (Soviet students cheering on Gordon Gekko from the movie "Wall Street")

GUEST COMMENTARY

Pat Payne

to the farcical (the "kinder, gentler, benevolent" KGB).

If there's anyone who still thinks Soviet-style communism is a good idea, they should read this book. Remnick talks of a nation sliding into decay — from the sensuous, luxuriant wealth of the few top Party bosses who skimmed profits in a "classless" society, to the average Ivan trying to make a living when the basic necessities are ever scarcer.

Remnick indicts the Soviet sys-

tem and its overreaching control of the nation for its corruption and repression. Even Gorbachev, who is seen by many in the West as a savior of Russia for dismantling the Soviet Union, is portrayed by Remnick as a political creature who often bent to the wishes of the hard-liners in a bid to save the USSR.

Now that we're coming up on the 60th anniversary of a number of key events in World War II, here's a book that — if you don't mind reading that isn't light in either sense of the term — is a classic of WWII history.

One of the best works, even now, about the nightmare regime in Germany is William Shirer's "Rise and

Turn to **Payne**, page 12

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