



Better than the Best: Black Athletes Speak, 1920-2007 (V. Ethel Willis White Books)

From University of Washington Press

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In these engaging and forthright interviews, thirteen African American athletes talk about how they endured through pain, loneliness, and rejection to become champions. In sports as diverse as football and fencing, wrestling and track and field, these men and women triumphed over the odds to become better than the best. Their legacy is in their accomplishments and in their determination to continue contributing to the societal transformation their efforts helped make possible.

Arthur Ashe Jr. (tennis)
Don Benning (wrestling)
Nikke Franke (fencing)
Ken Hudson (NBA referee)
Jennifer Johnson (Paralympics table tennis)
Sam Lacy (baseball and journalism)
Alan Page (football)
Maurice Smith (martial arts)
Mae Faggs Starr (track and field)
Wyomia Tyus (track and field)
Peter Westbrook (fencing)
Mal Whitfield (track and field)
Lenny Wilkens (basketball)

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Editorial Review

Review

"The book's most remarkable contribution to the literature. . . is that it offers previously unpublished stories of great athletes, some of whom did not publish memoirs. Encountering their voices is a wonderful gift. Summing Up: Recommended. All readers." *Choice*, July 2011

"Oral histories are a great way to capture the real flavor of the past by talking with people who not only were affected by the events that went on around them, but who sometimes helped to influence those events as well." *The Bookmonger*

"Those stories are powerful indeed. Lacy is joined in this volume by track and field stars Mal Whitfield and Mae Faggs Star, NBA player and coach Lenny Wilkens, tennis great Arthur Ashe, and several others." *UW Today*

Review

"Better Than the Best chronicles, with first-person vividness, the often tragic yet ennobling experience of the first wave of African American athletes that helped thwart discrimination in U.S. sports. The interviews provide fresh, incomparable perspective on a cultural history that must never be lost." *Art Thiel*, Seattle sports columnist

"This compelling, heartwarming, gender-balanced collection of interviews across diverse sports fields explores the tangled web of race." *Beverly Guy-Sheftall*, Spelman College

"Perhaps the most important text to emerge for a number of years in the study of race and sport in U.S. society." *Ian Ralston*, Liverpool John Moores University

"An important and inspiring account of an era when the achievements of African American athletes had a social and political significance they no longer have today. Here are the candid and fascinating stories of black athletic heroes whose lives changed American race relations forever and for the good of us all." *John Hoberman*, author of *Darwin's Athletes*

From the Inside Flap

These engaging and forthright interviews bring together the life stories of thirteen black athletes who have risen to the top rank of their sport. In revealing and fascinating detail, these athletes describe how they succeeded in the face of often daunting odds, often the result of economic barriers and racist attitudes and practices.

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