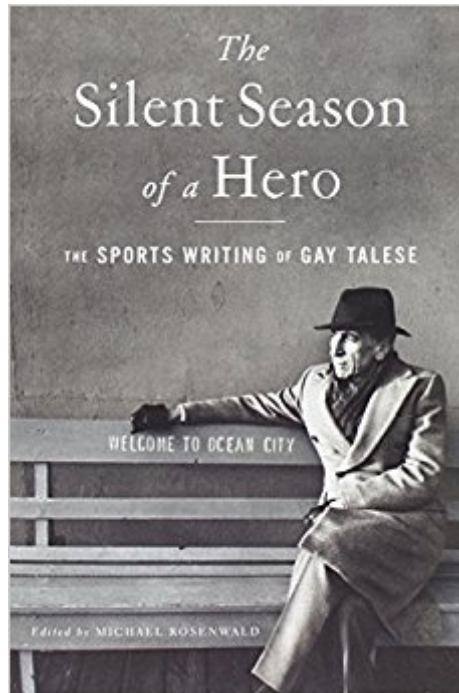


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The Silent Season Of A Hero: The Sports Writing Of Gay Talese



Synopsis

One of America's most acclaimed writers and journalists, Gay Talese has been fascinated by sports throughout his life. At age fifteen he became a sports reporter for his Ocean City High School newspaper; four years later, as sports editor of the University of Alabama's Crimson-White, he began to employ devices more common in fiction, such as establishing a "scene" with minute details-a technique that would later make him famous. Later, as a sports reporter for the New York Times, Talese was drawn to individuals at poignant and vulnerable moments rather than to the spectacle of sports. Boxing held special appeal, and his Esquire pieces on Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson in decline won praise, as would his later essay "Ali in Havana," chronicling Muhammad Ali's visit to Fidel Castro. His profile of Joe DiMaggio, "The Silent Season of a Hero," perfectly captured the great player in his remote retirement, and displayed Talese's journalistic brilliance, for it grew out of his on-the-ground observation of the Yankee Clipper rather than from any interview. More recently, Talese traveled to China to track down and chronicle the female soccer player who missed a penalty kick that would have won China the World Cup. Chronicling Talese's writing over more than six decades, from high school and college columns to his signature adult journalism- and including several never-before-published pieces (such as one on sports anthropology), a new introduction by the author, and notes on the background of each piece-The Silent Season of a Hero is a unique and indispensable collection for sports fans and those who enjoy the heights of journalism.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Talese has covered a number of topics, but his career's most constant thread is sports, and this collection shows what makes his writing so strong: Talese finds the poignant in the everyday. In "Portrait of a Young Prize Fighter," for instance, Talese withholds his subject's name until the end: "This young prize fighter's name happens to be Jose Torres. But he actually thinks, talks and dreams like dozens of other inexperienced professionals who train each day in Stillman's... seem to agree that despite all the punching, boxing still beats working for a living." It's a deft way to show the near-impossibility of becoming a household name in a crowded field. Even a simple piece about college ball has the kind of descriptive prose hardly seen in this genre today. Whether recounting a workaday game or taking on the monolithic topic of Muhammad Ali--which he did so well in his 1996 Esquire piece, "Ali in Havana," (included here)--Talese's writing possesses so much color and clear description of the world beyond the stadium that even non-sports fans will cheer. Photos. (Oct.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Going through this collection of nearly 40 sports pieces, dating from 1948 to 2006 and reprinted mostly from the New York Times, readers should be forgiven if they forgot, or never knew, just how daring and original Talese's sports-writing efforts were in their day, his prose distinctive for its precision, its silkiness, its attention to important details that lesser journalists routinely overlooked, and its empathy for losers. Innovations aside, what's most impressive is how well these pieces still hold together, whether it's a group of vignettes on former boxing champ Floyd Patterson, an offbeat profile of referee Ruby Goldstein ("the loneliest guy in boxing"), a prophetic 1951 piece on one of the nation's earliest sports agents, and a look at a rare Yankees season (1979) on the road to nowhere. Good stuff from a guy who once described his style as "the art of hanging out." --Alan Moores

Perfect

Gay Talese is pretty much the founder of what later came to be known as New Journalism (Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, etc.). He doesn't like that term, but it accurately describes his use of fiction narrative techniques to write non-fiction. This book is a collection of his sports articles and essays, ranging from the 1940s to the 2000s. Since it starts with articles written in his teens, it's a bit uneven in quality, but it gives you a good sense of how he developed his style. The magazine essays at the end are the best, particularly the title essay on Joe DiMaggio.

This anthology is the finest literature on sport that is in print. The long articles and the briefs are equally compelling pieces. The author's ability to capture the depths of character in his understated way is remarkable. A must read for any lover of the sporting world. Superb!

Expected more. Well written, entertaining but expected more interesting stories. Perhaps there are interesting to you, not everyone has same interests.

Some very good pieces here, esp about Floyd Patterson and Joe D. If you like general sports writing, you will enjoy this.

Great book

thank you Gay Talese

Gay Talese is one of those writers who probably deserves to be called a Writer, with a capital W. He might be best known as one of the early practitioners of the so-called "New Journalism" in the 1950's. Talese was part of a group of writers who were fans of certain fictional writers, and took some of their techniques and applied them to nonfiction, journalistic writing. When done right, it can be very effective. Talese got his start as a sports writer. Here some of his work of the years in that area is finally collected in one place. The resulting book is called "The Silent Season of a Hero," and it's certainly worth a look. Talese came out of Ocean City, N.J. and the University of Alabama, landing a job with the New York Times. One can just imagine the reaction of some of the traditionalists to his work. For example, he went to a sparsely attended college baseball game, and found out why the few fans in attendance bothered to show up on such a cold spring day. For example, he did a short profile of a boxer without mentioning his name until the last paragraph. Overall, you can see imagination and creativity at work in those early pieces. There is a story on a boxing referee, a person who makes mouthpieces for a living, a maker of horseshoes, a roller derby pioneer. The business people would call it "outside the box thinking." From there, the anthology moves into some of Talese's longer areas. The highlight is a story on Joe DiMaggio; the title of that article is the title of the book. DiMaggio was shown about 15 years after retirement, a barrel of contradictions. Remember, this is a person who claimed he wanted to live his life in peace ... and then goes and marries Marilyn Monroe, the most glamorous movie star in the world at the time. The story has been picked up by various anthologies as a classic, and deservedly so. But there are other good stories

here as well, with profiles of golf architect Robert Trent Jones and boxers Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali on the list. Editor Michael Rosenwald did make the odd decision to include a bit of Talese's work from high school and college. Some of the subjects might seem a little dated to today's audience, although frequently the themes are worthwhile and universal. "The Silent Season of a Hero" does let us see what some of the fuss is about for those not familiar with Talese's work. That in itself makes publication quite worthwhile.

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