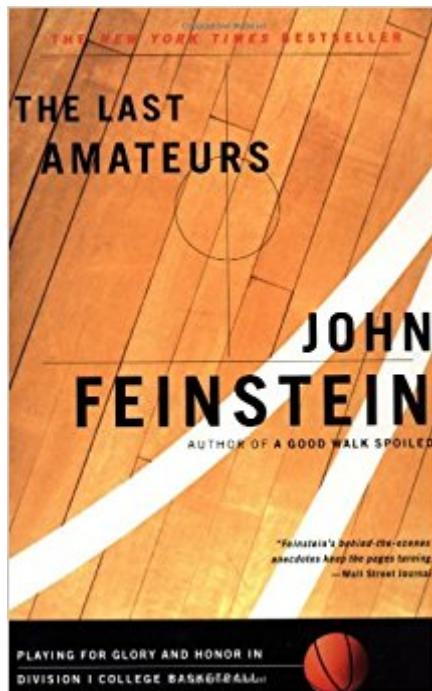


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# The Last Amateurs: Playing For Glory And Honor In Division I College Basketball



## **Synopsis**

Like millions who love college basketball, John Feinstein was first drawn to the game because of its intensity, speed and intelligence. Like many others, he felt that the vast sums of money involved in NCAA basketball had turned the sport into a division of the NBA, rather than the beloved amateur sport it once was. He went in search of college basketball played with the passion and integrity it once inspired, and found the Patriot League. As one of the NCAA's smallest leagues, none of these teams leaves college early to join the NBA and none of these coaches gets national recognition or endorsement contracts. The young men on these teams are playing for the love of the sport, of competition and of their schools. John Feinstein spent a season with these players, uncovering the drama of their daily lives and the passions that drive them to commit hundreds of hours to basketball even when there is no chance of a professional future. He offers a look at American sport at its purest.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The basketball playing Patriot League consisting of teams from Army, Navy, Lafayette, Lehigh, Bucknell, Holy Cross, and Colgate has a few features unique to most Division 1 leagues in this era of big time college basketball. There are no big bucks national TV contracts, Dick Vitale doesn't hyperventilate over the awesome talents of its athletes, the academic standards are high, and the players actually graduate. Yet the competition within the league is intense and the level of play is surprisingly good. While there are no national champions here, the athletes who play for the love of the competition and the game do get a chance to meet with the "big boys" on occasion. The winner of the league receives an invitation to the NCAA Tournament (where they are usually ousted in the

first round) and big time teams are sprinkled throughout the schedules. This year, for example, Penn State, Syracuse, Duke, Arizona State, Texas, and Wake Forest show up among the opponents. John Feinstein takes us on an extended guided tour of the league, its athletes, coaches, and administrators and gives us an inside look at college basketball as close to its roots as it gets these days. This is a nicely told tale of the fight to win the league's championship and its only bid to the NCAA Tournament. It's nice to read about athletes going all out to win even though the arenas may be small and the crowds might sometimes number in the hundreds rather than thousands. Caution though, Feinstein includes so much detail, so many names, and so many events that the reader may have a tendency to suffer from information overload. Nevertheless, this is a refreshing look at another aspect of collegiate competition.

In "The Last Amateurs" (a title that sounds like it could be a Bruce Willis film title), author John Feinstein ("A Good Walk Spoiled" and "The Majors" to name a few), returns to his true love, college basketball. In revisiting a subject that he last broached in his "expose" of Bobby Knight and the Indiana Hoosiers in "Season on the Brink", Feinstein proves very quickly that this book is a labor of love and that he is indeed a true fan of the sport. His subject matter is the 1999-2000 basketball season of Patriot League members, Navy, Lafayette, Lehigh, Army, Bucknell, Colgate, and Holy Cross. Although I consider myself a serious fan of college basketball, I must admit, I knew very little about this league or its teams until reading this book. Having grown up a fan of Big Ten basketball, I'm not sure I could have identified the states, let alone the cities, that these Patriot League teams called "home". And, while I was certainly recognized the names of the league best known coaches, Ralph Willard and Don Devoe, the rest of the league's coaches and players toiled away in basic anonymity. Feinstein changed all that. His description of the dedication and effort that these teams put forth every year, with little national recognition, was intriguing. He drove you to get to know these players and coaches better. And, along the way, gave the reader a vision of what college basketball (and athletics) should really be about - working toward graduation and playing for your school's pride (instead of playing to impress NBA scouts). This is the purist's view of college basketball and it was refreshing to read! I would encourage any fan of college athletics to give this book a try.

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