



Sweet Charlie, Dike, Cazzie, and Bobby Joe: High School Basketball in Illinois

Taylor H. A. Bell

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In urban and rural high schools throughout Illinois, basketball is a Friday night ritual. Local games are often the biggest thing happening all week, and the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and state tournaments attract fanatical fans by the thousands. Far from the jaded professionals, the stories in Taylor Bell's *Sweet Charlie, Dike, Cazzie, and Bobby Joe* are of hungry young men playing their hearts out, where high-tops and high hopes inspire "hoop dreams" from Peoria to Pinckneyville, and Champaign to Chicago. Bell, a life-long fan and authority on high school basketball in Illinois, brings together for the first time the stories of the great players, teams, and coaches from the 1940s through the 1990s. The book is titled for four players who reflect the unique quality of high school basketball, and whose first names are enough to trigger memories in fans who love the sport -- Sweet Charlie Brown, Dike Eddleman, Cazzie Russell, and Bobby Joe Mason. Bell offers exciting accounts of their exploits, told with a journalistic flair. Beyond a lifetime spent covering the sport, Bell's research includes three hundred and fifty personal interviews with coaches, administrators, family members, and fans. He has attended the Elite Eight finals of every boys' state basketball tournament since 1958, and met and written about many of the most outstanding teams, coaches, and players who helped to make Illinois one of the most exciting arenas for high school basketball in the United States. Sixty photographs add depth to the accounts. By a fan, for the fans, *Sweet Charlie, Dike, Cazzie, and Bobby Joe* is the authoritative book on high school basketball in Illinois, and will elate anyone who has thrilled to the poignant highs and shattering lows of high school sports.

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