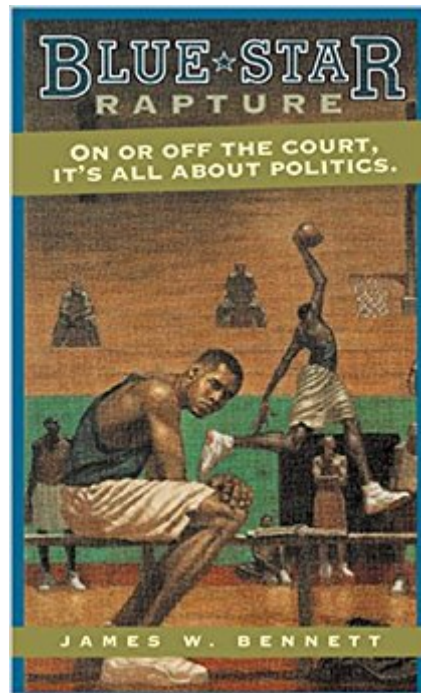




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Blue Star Rapture



Synopsis

T.J. Nucci may not be the best player at basketball camp, but he knows how to work the system. He even knows how to handle his buddy Tyron, who's got talent but not brains. If T.J. can help the college recruiters who want a piece of Tyron, the recruiters will help T.J. -- it's only fair, right? But not all the people T.J. encounters that summer are what they seem to be. Street agents, scouts, coaches, and players: everyone's selling something different. Then T.J. meets LuAnn, a troubled girl from the bible camp across the river. She says she's been saved, but her smiles mask a desperation that leads to tragedy. Suddenly T.J.'s not so sure of his own choices anymore. What's it all about? Can T.J. learn to play the power game and come out on top...or is he just another pawn?

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 UpABennett hits again from beyond the arc in this introspective tale about the recruitment of high school players at Full Court, an elite downstate Illinois summer basketball camp. T.J. Nucci, a Marlboro-smoking junior, loafers until the night he uses his brains to play the best game of his life, helping his team win the championship. Meanwhile, on a footbridge that crosses a gorge to a fundamentalist Christian church camp on the other side, T.J. meets a pregnant teenager and disses her belief in the biblical rapture. After her suicide, he reexamines his life, goals, and ambitions. This is a sophisticated book for mature readers. Expletives are integrated realistically and are not excessive. The depth of the moral quagmire that surrounds college recruiting is suggested by T.J.'s

complex friendship with Tyron, a huge basketball talent whose low IQ impedes his dreams of a big-time college career. T.J. rides on his bud's coattails to a point, but it is his desire to control things, especially his own destiny, that drives the plot. In the process, T.J. interacts with a well-rounded cast of adults including his mother, an inquisitive local newspaper reporter, his high school counselor, as well as the "street agents" and coaches at the camp who bend and break the rules intended to keep the playing field level. A final confrontation with Sister Simone, the church camp counselor whom T.J. believes could have prevented LuAnn's suicide, is particularly revelatory. A slim, challenging, disquieting, and finally hopeful read. A Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Jr. High School, Iowa City, IA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A week of basketball camp sparks deep changes in a high-school junior's outlook, but readers may wonder why, so sparsely written and roughly constructed is this story from Bennett (*The Squared Circle*, 1995, etc.). T.J. isn't looking too hard at just who's paying for him and his 6' 9" friend, Tyron, to attend camp; after all, a coach from North State has already made overtures, in direct violation of NCAA rules. Believing that Tyron is a hot enough prospect that colleges might overlook his severe learning disability, T.J. devotes himself to keeping his friend away from the "street agents" and their freebies. Then, sneaking out for a smoke, T.J. meets LuAnn, a pregnant young woman from the Christian camp nearby; something in her talk of blindly trusting God's will draws him to a sermon by her preacher, Sister Simone. Tragedy follows hard on triumph; during a camp championship game, T.J. finds the inner fire he had lacked, then learns that LuAnn is dead, a suicide who had been suffering from depression, encouraged to substitute faith for medication. Bennett awkwardly tucks a few expletives into the dialogue, patly introduces a character to fill T.J. in on clinical depression, finally drops Tyron (who, from an author known for his sensitive portrayals of mentally and emotionally disturbed characters, comes off as a buffoon) completely, and draws only a tenuous connection between LuAnn's story and T.J.'s. He also leaves plotlines unresolved, neglects to develop a clear climax, and is skimpy with sports action. (Fiction. 12-15) -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

T.J. and his best friend Tyron, both high-school students, are on their way to an elite summer basketball camp, where they will have a chance to play with other great athletes and hopefully Tyron will impress the college scouts who have already expressed some interest in him. Nobody will

be interested in seeing T.J. play. Although he has been invited to the camp, he is really only there to act as Tyron's advocate. Tyron is a great ballplayer, but he has a very low IQ and lives in a group home without any parents, and T.J. has taken it upon himself to guide his friend through the process of winning a basketball scholarship and choosing a college. At camp, T.J. is disturbed by the corruption and rule-breaking he sees, and especially by the presence of street agents--guys who dole out free gear in an attempt to get close to the players and land a position on their bankrolls. T.J. begins to worry that he is just as much of a leech, pushing Tyron toward college scouts for his own good, instead of Tyron's. Across the way from basketball camp is a Bible camp, and in between the two camps T.J. meets LuAnn, who glorifies putting her life into God's hands. T.J. thinks it's a bad idea, to simply let someone else make decisions for you, like the religious camp leaders do for LuAnn. But is he doing the same thing for Tyron? I liked this glimpse into the murky and potentially exploitative world of college basketball recruitment. However, I thought this story had some gaps. I would have liked to have had more information about Tyrone's and T.J.'s pasts. They obviously knew each other as kids, as T.J. kept using Tyron's childhood nickname, but that relationship was never clarified. I really didn't like T.J.'s character, either. I was irritated every time he faked an injury, and it seems like his coaches would have been able to see through this ploy. I also didn't like that he dropped responsibility for Tyron so easily. Tyron would have been lost by himself, and it wasn't fair for T.J. to handle everything for so long, then just suddenly quit.

Blue Star Rapture is a book about 2 friends (T.J. and Tyron) in High School, that are going through the basketball recruiting process. They have been best friends throughout their lives and have experienced a lot, going to Full Court basketball camp is just another experience that T.J. and Tyron go through together. The story told in the eyes of T.J. (the main character) gives his view of what is going on in his basketball life and personal life. T.J. basically goes to "Full Court" to keep Tyron company and to watch out for him. While there he tries to impress scouts that are interested in Tyron, and not T.J. While at "Full Court" T.J. meets a girl from a near by Bible Camp named LuAnn. He is interested in her but doesn't get too involved. LuAnn makes T.J. think about things he has never thought about before. They are opposites of each other and their relationship is awkward. The basketball recruiting process gets heated and scholarships are on the line for both T.J. and Tyron. Throughout the book Tyron doesn't take his actions too serious, so read the book to see what happens. This book shows the mental and physical toughness people may have to go through to get something. Also see what happens when things progress between both T.J. and LuAnn from Bible Camp. Not everyone goes through scouting experiences, and reading this book will give you

that opportunity.

A Review by Dane This book is about a friendship between two high school basketball players that came too face with one: The stress of grades and scholarships for colleges and two: The death of ones friend and not knowing why they did what they did. The two friends, T.J. and Tyron both play basketball and both get the privilege to play at Full Court Camp. Each of them experience life changing memories at this camp; what those memories are, is something you'll have to find out for yourself. I was unsure when the climax of the story was to take place but after figuring it out I realized how unexpected it hit me, without any warnings. (I'm sure that's how the author intended it; the only hints were when T.J. saw the caution tape surrounding the bridge.) He only had an idea. I didn't like the ending of the story; it didn't end with a spark like most stories do. It turned out to be an unhappy ending when T.J. looks down over the bridge were him and LuAnn spoke saw where she may have fallen. What I did enjoy about this story was that T.J. was determined to know why the death of his friend was so and better understand who pushed her into making the final decision to leap to her death. I would recommend this book to people that enjoy the game of basketball and enjoy the lifestyle of a high school student. All and all it had smooth fluency and was an easy read.

"Blue star Rapture" takes place at Heavens Gate, which is a big farm that consists of 2 camps. One being Full Court basketball camp, which the majority of the book takes place at. The other camp is a holy roller by the name of camp Shaddai. The main character T.J. is a 17 year old who is attending full court camp for one major reason. To help his friend Tyron get a basketball scholarship. In the book Tyron is not very smart and T.J. is the only person who really understands him, which is critical when talking to scouts and coaches. T.J. also feels if he helps the scouts with Tyron maybe he will be rewarded with some sort of scholarship or grant. T.J. also has some unexpected problems when he gets to camp such as this girl Luann. Luann is a teenager at camp Shaddai who gets knocked up by a strange man and decided to turn her life over to god. The only problem with this is the people at the camp don't look out for what's best, They follow whatever they believe god is trying to tell them even if it could turn into tragedy for other people. Overall "Blue Star Rapture" was a terrific book and I highly suggest that you go out and buy this book. It's a book for all ages and I hope you enjoy it.

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