



2019

Backfield Boys

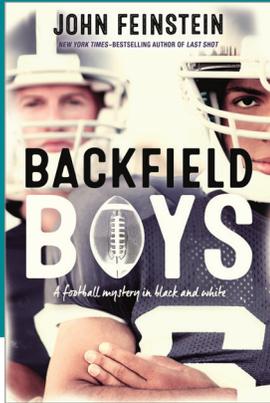
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Book Review

Backfield Boys

Author

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Reviewer

Amanda Morgan

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate,
Young Adult

Pages

353

Year

2017

ISBN

9780374305925

Publisher

Farrar Straus Giroux
Book for Young Readers

Best friends Jason and Tom have full-ride scholarships to a prestigious school for their outstanding football talent. Jason is a lightning-fast wide receiver and Tom is a quick-thinking quarterback with amazing aim, so they are shocked at practice when Jason is named a quarterback and Tom a wide receiver. They are even more shocked as Jason gets playing time and Tom never touches the field. Then, their suspicion is raised when they realize dorm rooms are segregated by color. Secretly, they contact sports journalists who inform them their school has never had a black quarterback. Tom is black. The reporters have been sure for a while that the boys' new school has not only a racist head coach, but a racist founder. However, nothing can be done about this without sound proof of injustice. Desperate to make wrongs right, the boys continue attending their frustratingly prejudiced new school until they have enough to evidence to do so.

Written clearly, with easy to follow action, this book is great for capturing the attention of intermediate to young adult readers. While it would help the reader to have a general knowledge of football, non-football fans can still enjoy this book. Unfortunately, the main characters' voices seem older than that of high school freshmen, which is what they are. Also, the racist coaches and leaders are so extreme they seem more like the two-dimensional, pure evil villains of a fairytale than real people. This may not be a problem, depending on the reader's opinion, as it doesn't detract from the storyline and makes the protagonists seem even more heroic in contrast. The majority of the protagonists are white. It would have been nice to hear more about how Tom felt as he was being discriminated and to see him stand up for himself, but the majority of the book's focus is on Jason and the things he, his white roommate, and the two reporters of unspecified race do to stand up for people of color. Nonetheless, the book still has many good messages on equality for all.

*Contains mild language