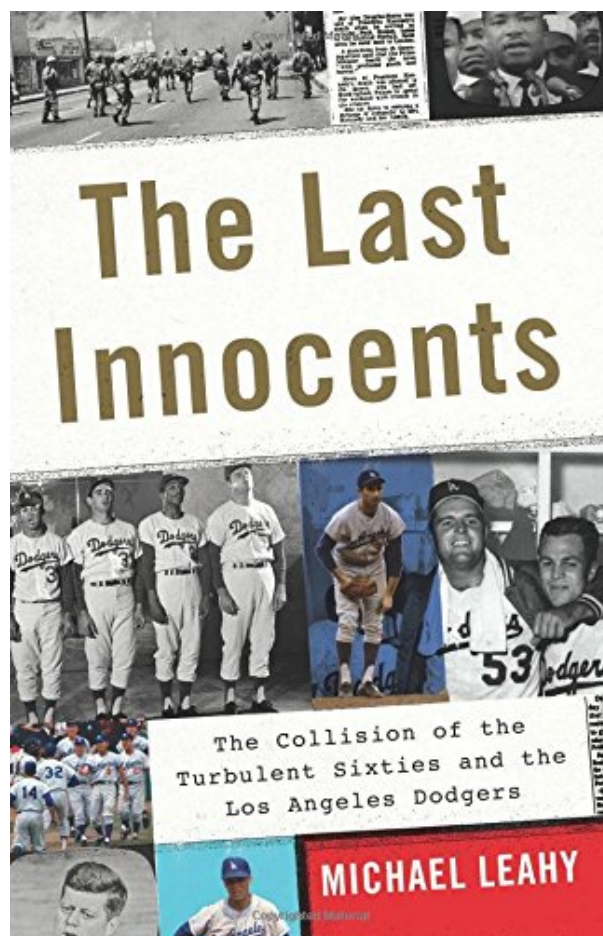
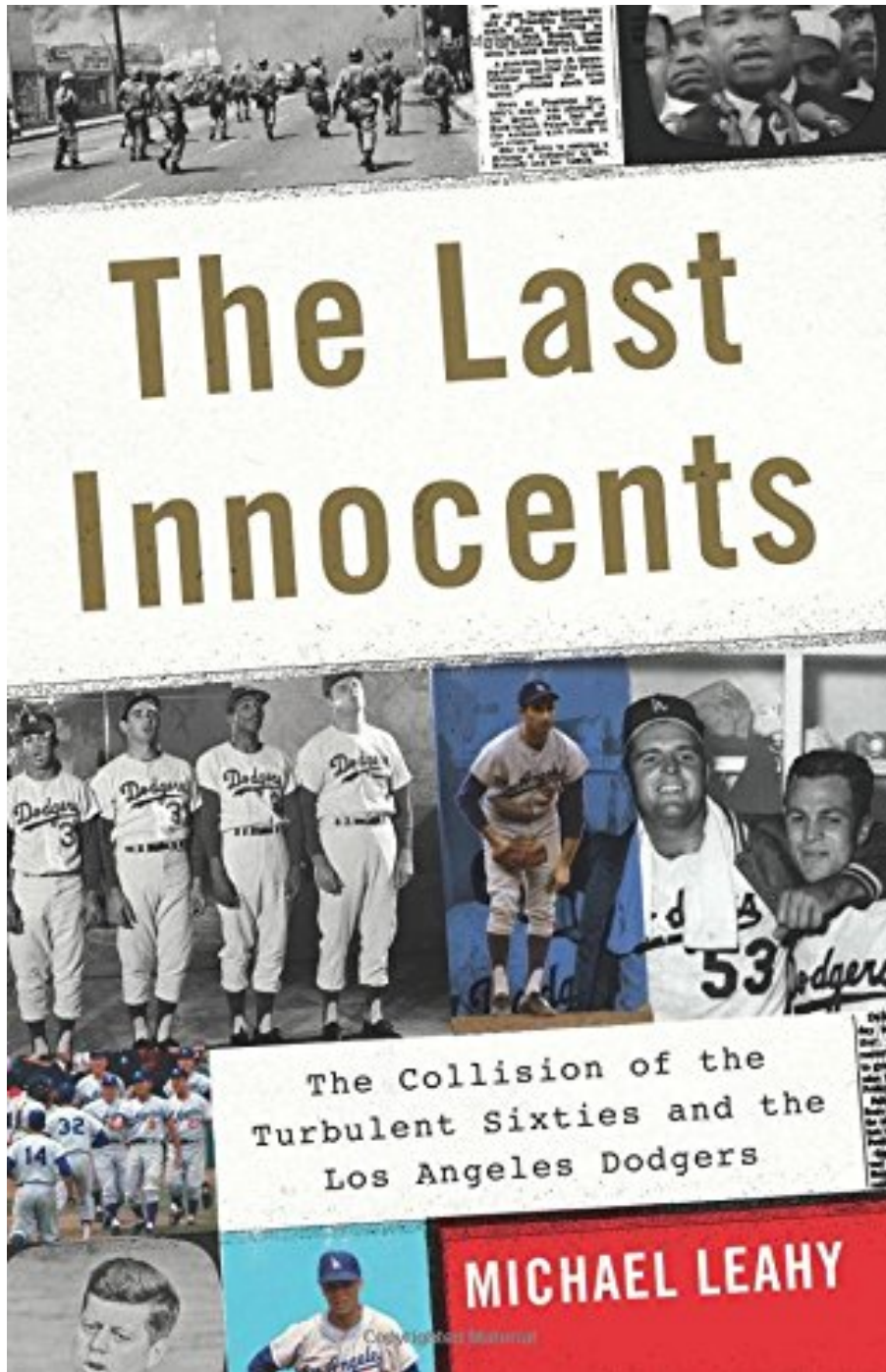


THE LAST INNOCENTS: THE COLLISION OF THE TURBULENT SIXTIES AND THE LOS ANGELES DODGERS BY MICHAEL LEAHY



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Review

“The Last Innocents is a great American story. Baseball in the southern California sun, Maury Wills stealing, Vin Scully narrating, life spinning and sweeping like a Koufax curveball toward the future—the tableau could not be richer for a writer as evocative as Michael Leahy.” (David Maraniss, author of *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero*)

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“To read Michael Leahy’s well-crafted, resolutely human *The Last Innocents* is to feel the anger that welled up inside the Dodgers of the era...Mr. Leahy thrives as he describes how the Dodgers navigated this strange new world.” (John Schullian, *Wall Street Journal*)

“A book that seeks to place the team within a broader historical and cultural context... This is the strength of *The Last Innocents*, the way it moves beyond the game to the issues underneath.” (*Washington Post*)

“The must-read baseball book of this spring and summer so far: *The Last Innocents*, by Michael Leahy...” (Mike Vaccaro, *New York Post*)

“Brilliantly reported and undeniably powerful... I can’t count the times reading this book I stopped, looked up, and said ‘Holy shit,’ and long before reaching the halfway mark I was slowing down to savor every word... I can’t recommend this book enough...*The Last Innocents* is an incredible read.” (Jeff Polman, *CrookedScoreboard.com*)

“[A] gripping narrative... By using their personal experiences to tell the story of an oft-recounted era of American history, Leahy’s book packs an unanticipated jolt of humanness.” (*Publishers Weekly*)

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From the Back Cover

It's rare for a team to encapsulate an era as indelibly as the Los Angeles Dodgers did the 1960s. White, black, Jewish, Christian, wealthy, working class, conservative, liberal—the Dodgers embodied the disparate cultural forces at play in an America riven by race and war.

In *The Last Innocents*, Michael Leahy tells the story of this mesmerizing time and extraordinary team through seven players—Maury Wills, Sandy Koufax, Wes Parker, Jeff Torborg, Tommy Davis, Dick Tracewski, and Lou Johnson—taking readers through the high drama of their World Series appearances, pivotal triumphs, and individual setbacks while the Dodgers reigned and baseball was king.

It is a story about what it was like to be a major leaguer when the country was turned upside down by the tumult of the civil rights movement, a series of wrenching political assassinations, and the shock waves of the Vietnam War. Outside the public eye, these seven Dodgers—friends, mentors, and confidants—struggled to understand their place in society and in a sport controlled by owners whose wishes were fiat. Even as they starred in games watched by millions, they coped with anxieties and indignities their fans knew nothing about—some of their wounds deeply personal, others more common to the times, though no less painful. In their dissatisfaction, they helped plant the seeds of a rebellion that would change their sport.

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From an award-winning journalist comes the riveting odyssey of seven Los Angeles Dodgers in the 1960s—a chronicle of a team, a game, and a nation in transition during one of the most exciting and unsettled decades in history.

Legendary Dodgers Maury Wills, Sandy Koufax, Wes Parker, Jeff Torborg, Dick Tracewski, Lou Johnson and Tommy Davis encapsulated 1960s America: white and black, Jewish and Christian, wealthy and working class, pro-Vietnam and anti-war, golden boy and seasoned veteran. *The Last Innocents* is a thoughtful, technicolor portrait of these seven players—friends, mentors, confidants, rivals, and allies—and their storied team that offers an intriguing look at a sport and a nation in transition. Bringing into focus the high drama of their World Series appearances from 1962 to 1972 and their pivotal games, Michael Leahy explores these men’s interpersonal relationships and illuminates the triumphs, agonies, and challenges each faced individually.

Leahy places these men’s lives within the political and social maelstrom that was the era when the conformity of the 1950s gave way to demands for equality and rights. Increasingly frustrated over a lack of real bargaining power and an iron-fisted management who occasionally meddled in their personal affairs, many players shared an uneasy relationship with the team’s front office. This contention mirrored the discord and uncertainty generated by myriad changes rocking the nation: the civil rights movement, political assassinations, and growing hostility to the escalation of the Vietnam War. While the nation around them changed, these players each experienced a personal and professional metamorphosis that would alter public perceptions and their own.

Comprehensive and artfully crafted, *The Last Innocents* is an evocative and riveting portrait of a pivotal era in baseball and modern America.

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- 496 pages

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SHAQ GOLDSTEIN SAYS: 1960’S DODGERS... UNDER THE MICROSCOPE.. ON...& ... OFF THE FIELD. A GROWN UP KID OF THE 60’S DREAM COME TRUE

By Rick Shaq Goldstein

As a child born in New York to a family that lived and died with the Brooklyn Dodgers... “Dem Bums” were my life... and lo and behold when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles after the 1957 season... my family moved right along with them. So the time period covered in this amazing... detailed... no holds barred... story of the 1960’s era Los Angeles Dodgers... is now being read and reviewed by a Grandfather... who as a kid... not only went to at least one-hundred games at the L.A. Coliseum and Dodger Stadium... during this time frame... but I watched games on TV... never went anywhere without my transistor radio listening religiously to Vince Scully...and I ran and got the Los Angeles Times from the corner liquor store every morning for the sports section... and my Dad brought home the Herald Examiner every night from his job in downtown L.A.... and the sports section went directly to me upon his entry into our house. (Note: these are the two newspapers most frequently quoted in this book.) I still have in my possession my handmade notebooks with reams of 3-hole-punched notebook papers with yellowing scotch tape holding on to pages of the actual headlines and articles that are recounted in this wondrous work of art by author Michael Leahy.

This book is akin to a gift floating down from heaven for a lifelong Dodger fan from this era. It is so well written... that I literally couldn’t stop reading it. If they filmed a movie of my reading this book... they would show tears of joy... as flashbacks took me from my Grandfatherly couch... magically back to the most wondrous days of my youth. Going from my Little League and Babe Ruth games to the Coliseum and Dodger Stadium to see my heroes up close and personal in action. And please make no mistake... the author... truly brings those dreamy days... back... in exquisite detail. What is also added... are many... many details... from the locker room... from the players private lives... the kind of things that could never... and were never... reported back in the days of black and white TV... and no 24/7 multi-media reporting. So as much as I still... to this day... remember every play... every statistic... every competitive team... I was overjoyed... to be able to start fitting missing pieces together... in Dodger personal relationships... and just as importantly... what really... really made an individual Dodger become the man... AND... player they became.

And much of this heretofore unknown detail is heartwarming... but some... in perhaps... the most surprising and sad... of the seven main ballplayers depicted/dissected... is Wes Parker... who... along with Gil Hodges... are probably... the two greatest fielding first baseman in all of Dodger history... and from a child/teenager’s (me) point of view... was movie star handsome... smooth as silk out in the field... and known to have come from an extremely privileged background. Until this utterly illuminating book... I never thought I would be sitting here feeling so sorry... and demoralized... when finding out the truth of Wes’s loveless... abusive upbringing! The other six 60’s Dodgers spotlighted are Maury Wills... Sandy Koufax... Tommy Davis.... Jeff Torborg... Dick Tracewski... and Lou Johnson. (Oh... do I remember “Sweet Lou” lighting up the Dodgers with his play and his smile!) Dodger fans... and old school baseball fans... don’t for a minute think the book is only about them. Everyone is there... the mean... lovable... Big D... the cold stoic Walt Alston... Walter O’Malley... the not as loving and charming to the Dodger Family as the media led you to believe... and perhaps one of the great villains of the book... the devious... lying... underhanded... demoralizing... general manager... Buzzie Bavasi. In fact after reading page after page on how awful Bavasi and O’Malley treated players... despite having the Pot Of Gold known as Dodger Stadium... bringing in two-and-a-half-to-three-million-fans-a-year... I... for the first time don’t hate free agency and its riches quite as much.

If the game itself... and the locker room... and family background ... dissection isn’t enough... Leahy... expertly... and almost seamlessly... merges all the world’s current events... everything from the Cuban Missile Crisis... the Kennedy assassination... Viet Nam... race relations... and more... right into the daily mix of Dodger historical life.

I feel like I could literally write a book about this book... but to share one story that I think will give potential readers an idea... of the near poetic trance an old-school baseball fan will be put into... many times over... by the author... let me set it up for you. The greatest one-two pitching punch in my lifetime... was Sandy Koufax and Don "Big D" Drysdale... in their prime... back to back. After a spring training game Sandy and "Big D" had a beer with Henry Aaron... Eddie Mathews... and Rico Carty. After a few friendly and amusing stories were shared... and there were laughs and grins all around... the following transpired:

"AFTER DRYSDALE TOLD A FUNNY STORY OF HIS OWN, THE INFORMAL GATHERING BROKE UP. THE SMILING BRAVES HAD BEGUN HEADING BACK TO THEIR CLUBHOUSE WHEN DRYSDALE INTERRUPTED, THINKING A LAST POINT NEEDED TO BE MADE. HE LOOKED AT AARON AND THE OTHER RIVALS AND SAID, "YOU KNOW, JUST BECAUSE WE'RE ALL HAVING THIS FUN TIME, DON'T THINK I'M NOT GONNA KNOCK YOU ON YOUR "BUTT" WHEN YOU COME UP TO HIT."

"THE BRAVES LOOKED AT HIM, PERHAPS WAITING FOR A LAUGH. ONLY DRYSDALE WASN'T LAUGHING. HE SPUN AROUND AND LEFT WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, LEAVING THE BRAVES TO REALIZE THAT NOTHING ABOUT DRYSDALE THE COMPETITOR HAD CHANGED: HE WOULD LIKELY THROW AT OR NEAR THEM SOON. IN THAT INSTANT, (THEY) UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DODGERS' TWO PITCHING STARS, EACH OF WHOM (THEY) ADMIRED. "DON DIDN'T WANT ANYONE EVER TO HAVE AN ADVANTAGE OVER HIM, DON WAS THE BLOOD AND GUTS OF OUR TEAM. DON STRUCK FEAR INTO PEOPLE ON A FIELD. SANDY DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANY OF THAT. PEOPLE KNEW THEY COULDN'T HIT HIM, BUT NOBODY FEARED GETTING HURT BY HIM. OPPONENTS WERE JUST IN AWE OF HIM."

Additionally a very short anecdote... among many... that highlighted the "sign-of-the-times"... was the "clubhouse" friendship that developed between Maury Wills and Sandy Koufax. They took to opening the others fan mail... in an effort to shield the other... from the pain... and the fear... that may be lurking within. Sandy would try to root out any racist tirades or threats from Maury's letters... and Maury... tried to weed out any severe anti-Semitic threats or rants.

I not only recommend this book highly... but I also want to thank the author for the time and effort to create such a masterpiece that has brought me... such enjoyment... fueled with nostalgia... and deeper insights than I thought were still available.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A great read, with one caveat

By Dave Cunningham

This was a must-read because author Michael Leahy and I were forged in the same approximate crucible. We're the same age, both grew up in Los Angeles as Dodger fans in the Koufax Era and were affected deeply in our teen years by the Turbulent Sixties. Also, we both made our careers in journalism. I suspect our paths diverged with the emergence of New Journalism in the hands of Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe and the like. And therein lies my sole criticism of Leahy's "The Last Innocents."

I was blown away by Capote's "In Cold Blood," wondering how he could get inside the heads of the two killers and write non-fiction as if it were a compelling novel. Ultimately, I came to reject New Journalism because it rang false. The authors of this trend throw us an enormous amount of personal detail, insights, thoughts, perspectives and moods that can't possibly be fact-checked or perhaps even sourced. In other words, it reads like fiction because to some degree, it IS fiction.

And this is what Michael Leahy has written. He was 10 years old in 1963, yet he tells us unequivocally what Maury Wills, Sandy Koufax, Wes Parker, Don Drysdale and many others were thinking and feeling at that time. Yes, Leahy spent time talking with Wills and some of the others, but that was half a century later. Memories stray. Wills had been through drug and alcohol addictions. Drysdale was dead. Koufax refused to talk about himself.

Leahy has compiled an impressive mass of sources at the end of the book. He relied on a lot of old published stories to document his facts, but Leahy concedes those "facts" sometimes are fiction (e.g., the Bob Hunter newspaper article that claimed Koufax would quit unless he got a \$90,000 salary). So Leahy has sifted through an enormous amount of information, chosen to use that which works best for his narrative, and produced a very rich and readable book in the New Journalism style.

It does indeed read like a novel, and it's a page-turner. I couldn't put it down. It's a monumental work, and a great insiders-look at the mini-dynasty of the Los Angeles Dodgers in the Sixties.

I became a baseball writer, covered the Dodgers and got to know or talk with many of the characters in this book, including Koufax, Wills, Bavasi, Scully, Drysdale, Sutton, Hunter and more. Major League Baseball was my beat and career for more than 20 years. So I know that much of what Leahy writes is true.

I highly recommend "The Last Innocents" to anyone who was a fan of those old Dodger teams and stars. It will take you inside the stadium, inside the clubhouse, and inside the minds. I also recommend you read it with the knowledge that these words -- perhaps like any history or memoir -- are merely the best and most readable truths that the author could determine.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A great slice of Americana for all readers...

By Writer/Teacher

"We were champions, but we were kind of nobodies to ourselves," Maury Wills, Los Angeles Dodger player sums up his feelings in *The Last Innocents*. Even if you're not a top-of-the-line baseball fan, as I am not, this book marries Americana baseball with culture of the late 1950's to 1960's in a page turner of bittersweet memories.

"During the 1950's, it didn't matter where you lived, baseball and the Dodgers reached everywhere," author Michael Leahy writes. As a former feature writer for *The Washington Post*, Leahy has done a tremendous amount research here and conducted crucial interviews with the Dodger players from this era, as surely this book will find it's place on the history shelf of culture.

The book begins with the relevancy of baseball in mid-century American life and continues finding it's spot in history among other iconic events as the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of Kennedy and many pop-culture events such as Mohammed Ali meeting the Beatles.

Baseball was not immune to the same tough issues the country faced in the 1960s, and still must face: segregation, integration and the issue of race. As a southerner, I was intrigued to read of the segregation accounts by major and minor league players - - separate training facilities, separate hotels, racial insults - - Some of the same issues I remember happening in the Mississippi of my youth. Discrimination was everywhere. And that's still important to remember.

From Dodger to Yankee player backstories, it reads and unfolds like a good mystery with superstar athletes as main characters affected by the events surrounding their time. Especially important are the stories of

athletic success despite huge obstacles these guys experienced: players with second jobs to supplement their baseball salaries, labor disagreements, contract downfalls, the “reserve” players just hoping for opportunity . . . All too often the admiration we give to extreme athleticism omits the determination and grit factor that must be tried in a court of disappointment.

You don't have to be a baseball fanatic to enjoy this book. It's a sweet read. And it's an important slice of Americana for everyone.

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“The must-read baseball book of this spring and summer so far: *The Last Innocents*, by Michael Leahy...” (Mike Vaccaro, *New York Post*)

“Brilliantly reported and undeniably powerful... I can’t count the times reading this book I stopped, looked up, and said ‘Holy shit,’ and long before reaching the halfway mark I was slowing down to savor every word... I can’t recommend this book enough...*The Last Innocents* is an incredible read.” (Jeff Polman, *CrookedScoreboard.com*)

“[A] gripping narrative... By using their personal experiences to tell the story of an oft-recounted era of American history, Leahy’s book packs an unanticipated jolt of humanness.” (*Publishers Weekly*)

Praise for *When Nothing Else Matters*: “The best sports book of the year...easily the most fully formed portrait of Jordan ever written.” (*GQ*)

“Riveting, myth-shattering.” (*Chicago Tribune*)

“Michael Leahy has written a heck of a book....Mr. Leahy combines an unrelenting eye for detail with extraordinary big-picture analysis.” (Washington Times)

“A gripping behind-the-scenes book...an important corrective to our current celebrity culture.” (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

“When *Nothing Else Matters* gives us the best look we are likely to have of Jordan in decline...The result is a richly detailed, anecdote-driven account of one of the most famous men in the world approaching the end of his rope.” (Ron Rapoport, Chicago Sun-Times)

From the Back Cover

It's rare for a team to encapsulate an era as indelibly as the Los Angeles Dodgers did the 1960s. White, black, Jewish, Christian, wealthy, working class, conservative, liberal—the Dodgers embodied the disparate cultural forces at play in an America riven by race and war.

In *The Last Innocents*, Michael Leahy tells the story of this mesmerizing time and extraordinary team through seven players—Maury Wills, Sandy Koufax, Wes Parker, Jeff Torborg, Tommy Davis, Dick Tracewski, and Lou Johnson—taking readers through the high drama of their World Series appearances, pivotal triumphs, and individual setbacks while the Dodgers reigned and baseball was king.

It is a story about what it was like to be a major leaguer when the country was turned upside down by the tumult of the civil rights movement, a series of wrenching political assassinations, and the shock waves of the Vietnam War. Outside the public eye, these seven Dodgers—friends, mentors, and confidants—struggled to understand their place in society and in a sport controlled by owners whose wishes were fiat. Even as they starred in games watched by millions, they coped with anxieties and indignities their fans knew nothing about—some of their wounds deeply personal, others more common to the times, though no less painful. In their dissatisfaction, they helped plant the seeds of a rebellion that would change their sport.

Revelatory, artfully crafted, and sweeping in its scope, *The Last Innocents* is a unique portrait of a watershed era in baseball and in America.

Advance Praise for *The Last Innocents*

“*The Last Innocents* is a great American story. Baseball in the southern California sun, Maury Wills stealing, Vin Scully narrating, life spinning and sweeping like a Koufax curveball toward the future—the tableau could not be richer for a writer as evocative as Michael Leahy.”—David Maraniss, author of *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero*

“In an excavation as deep and as probing as his splendid book on Michael Jordan, the prodigiously talented Michael Leahy sheds a revealing light on what now seems like an ancient era in baseball, when white Cy Young winners such as Sandy Koufax were looked upon by owners as hired help and black MVPs such as Maury Wills were treated even worse. And along the way, he answers the eternal question: ‘Who moved Burright?’ Who is Burright? Well, you'll just have to pick up this absorbing book and see.”—Mark Kram Jr., author of the PEN Literary Award-winning *Like Any Normal Day*

Praise for *When Nothing Else Matters*

“The best sports book of the year . . . easily the most fully formed portrait of Michael Jordan ever written.”—GQ

“Riveting, myth shattering.”—Chicago Tribune

About the Author

Michael Leahy is the author of *Hard Lessons* and *When Nothing Else Matters: Michael Jordan's Last Comeback*, which was described by GQ Magazine as “the best sports book of the year...easily the most fully formed portrait of Jordan ever written and one of the best sports books in recent memory.” His award-winning career has included thirteen years as a writer for *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Post Magazine*. Leahy's 2005 *Washington Post Magazine* story about a California sperm donor won the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award for best magazine story of the year. His stories have been selected four times for the annual Best American Sports Writing anthologies. He lives outside Washington D.C.

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