



The Audacity of Hoop: Basketball and the Age of Obama

By Alexander Wolff

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While basketball didn't take up residence in the White House in January 2009, the game nonetheless played an outsized role in forming the man who did. In *The Audacity of Hoop*, celebrated sportswriter Alexander Wolff examines Barack Obama, the person and president, by the light of basketball. This game helped Obama explore his identity, keep a cool head, impress his future wife, and define himself as a candidate.

Wolff chronicles Obama's love of the game from age 10, on the campaign trail—where it eventually took on talismanic meaning—and throughout his two terms in office. More than 125 photographs illustrate Obama dribbling, shooting free throws, playing pickup games, cooling off with George Clooney, challenging his special assistant Reggie Love for a rebound, and taking basketball to political meetings. There is also an assessment of Obama's influence on the NBA, including a dawning political consciousness in the league's locker rooms.

Sidebar reveals the evolution of the president's playing style, "Baracketology"—a not-entirely-scientific art of filling out the commander in chief's NCAA tournament bracket—and a timeline charts Obama's personal and professional highlights.

Equal parts biographical sketch, political narrative, and cultural history, *The Audacity of Hoop* shows how the game became a touchstone in Obama's exercise of the power of the presidency.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The cool, the flow, the edge, the drive, the individual and the team, the black and white - all of that is Barack Obama, playing basketball, the American game. To those who consider the president a mystery, *The Audacity of Hoop* offers a key to understanding him, through Alex Wolff's fluid prose and Pete Souza's evocative photographs."--David Maraniss, author of *Barack Obama: The Story*

"*The Audacity of Hoop*—like the game of basketball it evokes and the political icon who memorably plays it—is a beautiful and timely book that moves in the graceful rhythms of the hardwood that President Obama has embraced. Basketball has not only taught Obama to be a fierce but disciplined competitor; it has also offered him a swagger and a vocabulary of physical cool and mental toughness that have carried him from street games to the biggest court in the world: the American presidency. Wolff's brilliant and lovely pickup game of a book is a fitting metaphor to explore the racial and cultural dimensions of a man who used basketball to conquer the world and then used that power to play, as often as he could, wherever he was, the game that he—and the nation he leads—loves."—**Michael Eric Dyson**, author of *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*

"*The Audacity of Hoop* reveals not only how Barack Obama's first love shaped his character and fired his ambitions but also how, even now, the president's pickup game is 'a kind of polygraph of the heart.' With poignant analysis and sparkling prose, Alexander Wolff shows us how basketball helped our forty-fourth president become as skilled at consensus building as he is at trash-talking. I love this book." —**Don Van Natta Jr.**, ESPN Investigative Reporter, Pulitzer Prize winner, *New York Times* best-selling author of *First Off the Tee: Presidential Hackers, Duffers, and Cheaters from Taft to Bush*, co-author of *Her Way: The Hopes and Ambitions of Hillary Rodham Clinton*, and author of *Wonder Girl: The Magnificent Sporting Life of Babe Didrikson Zaharias*

"Alexander Wolff, with grace and marvelous insight, has written a beautiful basketball book that fans of the game will love. Whether you're a Republican or Democrat, *The Audacity of Hoop* will enthrall you. Wolff vividly explores basketball's influence on the identity of President Obama and in the process reveals something magical about the sport itself."—**Kevin Merida**, Managing Editor of the *Washington Post* and co-author of *Obama: The Historic Campaign in Photographs*

"A highly informed and fascinating look at the intersection of sports and politics that led me to unexpected realizations about Obama, the presidency, and the world of basketball. Smart and fun."—**Gerald Early**, Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters, Washington University in St. Louis

"In the book—which features large-scale photographs of the President at play, many taken by the official White House photographer, Pete Souza—Wolff breaks down the particulars of the President's game.... Presidents are endlessly scrutinized, and must constantly calibrate their self-presentations to appeal to the electorate. Basketball, for all of its cultural complexity, has arguably been, as Wolff writes, one way for Obama 'to let the public see exactly who he was.'"--The New Yorker

About the Author

Alexander Wolff is a senior writer at *Sports Illustrated* and the *New York Times* author of *Big Game, Small World: A Basketball Adventure*.

Users Review

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Jeanne Linder:

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