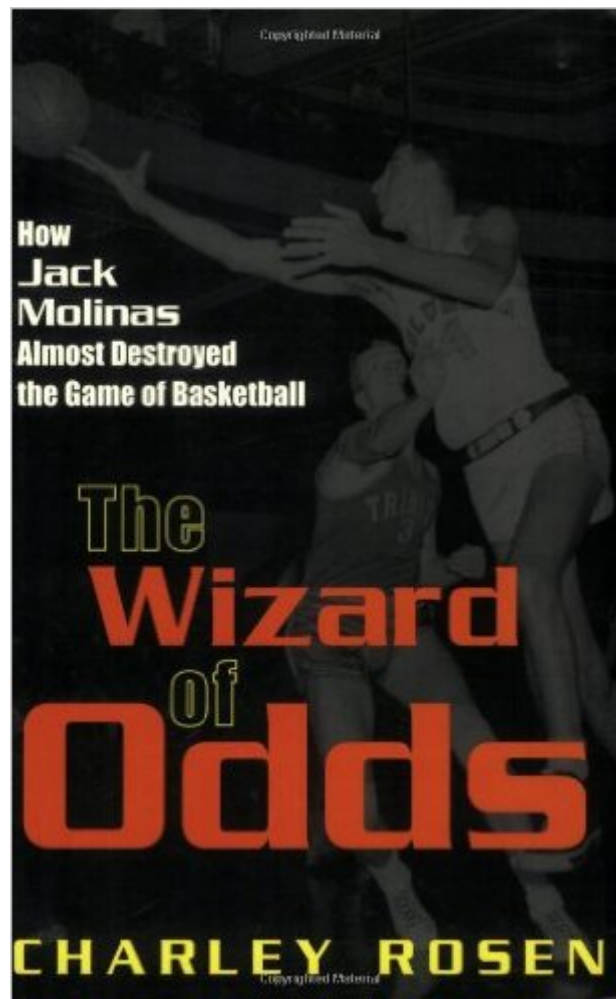


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The Wizard Of Odds: How Jack Molinas Almost Destroyed The Game Of Basketball



Synopsis

In *The Wizard of Odds*, renowned and best-selling basketball writer Charley Rosen brings us for the first time the full life story of Jack Molinas, one of the greatest basketball players of his era, a man whose gambling addiction and hubris caused his ultimate demise. Drawing on numerous, previously unavailable first-person accounts, including Jack Molinas's own journal and trial transcripts, Rosen presents the true saga of a man who perhaps better than anyone around him understood the weaknesses of the system in which he lived—so much so that he convinced himself that he could manipulate that system to his advantage with total impunity, in a life's journey that took him from NBA play to the Mafia and the pornographic film industry, and to an ultimate tragic destiny.

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Customer Reviews

Caveat Emptor: This book is based in large part on interviews conducted by the late New York Post sports columnist Milton Gross, my father. They were used without the permission of his heirs, and were never checked against the audiotapes on which they were based which are in my possession and have been for almost thirty years. But what's worse is that the book is factually inaccurate and the author did not even attempt to confirm what he printed. Instead of thanking the person whose work he based his book on, Rosen prints untruths about him. One example: on the last page of the book, Rosen has Milton Gross skipping Molinas' funeral and instead, attempting to cash in on his death. Milton Gross had been dead for over two years when Molinas died. He would have had to make that call from his grave.

Talk about a non-fiction book that reads like a novel. THE WIZARD OF ODDS has all the elements of a first rate piece of fiction--comedy, tragedy, a story arch, the triumph of justice and most of all a fascinating main character. Jack Molinas had it all. He was tall, rock-star handsome and possessed a genius I.Q. And he had the basketball skills to make it to the NBA. Yet, as Charley Rosen's tale unfolds, Molinas had a tragic flaw that eventually cost him his job with the Fort Wayne Pistons, placed him at the highest level of scuzzy gamblers who corrupted college basketball in the early 1960s, earned him a prison stretch and eventually cost him his life. Rosen's story unfolds on several levels but at its heart, THE WIZARD OF ODDS is about how the American subculture of gambling corrupted one of our nation's favorite sports. The author's narrative style is highly readable with a minimum of moralistic preaching. Rosen lets Molinas' story speak for itself. I would highly recommend THE WIZARD OF ODDS to anyone interested in the history of college basketball or anyone who would just like to read about one of the most intriguing figures in sports or any other field.

Charley Rosen provides readers with an entertaining book about one of basketball's most talented players, Jack Molinas. Unfortunately, it seems that some of Rosen's information might not be accurate - especially the statements about one of Jack's long-time friends, Shirley Marcus, which are based on innuendoes; and some of Rosen's statements about one of the greatest sportswriters of all times, Milton Gross. What is particularly disappointing about this otherwise interesting book is how Rosen protects the basketball establishment by putting all the blame on Jack Molinas. The fact is, a real exploration of gambling in sports could lead to a public outcry - followed by reduced advertiser support and cancelled television contracts. Molinas was no angel, to be sure - and Rosen does a pretty good job of characterizing this complex and talented athlete. But as the title of the book implies, it is the betting odds - the point spreads that appear in most major newspapers - that is more key to the problem than the actions of a single "Wizard" like Jack Molinas, or a lone referee (as David Stern would like us to believe). Sadly, the current Commissioner, team owners, as well as sportswriters and commentators, would rather sidestep the problem posed by gambling than risk the millions of dollars that are at stake from advertising, television contracts, and sports fans. (Jerry Marcus is the author of the just-published novel, Broken Trust - The Murder Of Basketball Star Jack Molinas)

I've found Jack Molinas to be a fascinating, if disgusting, character since I read about him in the book "Foul" about Connie Hawkins, and then even more so after I heard he was killed in an

apparent mob hit. So while the subject is fascinating, I have some reservations about the author and this particular book. First, the author begins (and ends) with some really annoying moralizing, and it almost makes you want to go no further. Secondly, I got the general feeling that much of what I was reading was unreliable, but I read on, remaining skeptical, and taking the good with the bad.

Always a big fan of Connie Hawkins, this book filled in a lot of blanks about the nightmare Hawkins went through. Amazing how brilliant Jack Molinas was, but a very bad character. Loved the book, very well written.

Interesting background of post war - 1960 growing up as a "city kid" in New York. Lots and lots of characters vividly portrayed by Rosen. The author does tend to excuse Molinas' self-centered, corrupt behavior because he was a very bright guy who graduated from Stuyvesant, Columbia and Brooklyn Law school (in his spare time!).

The book goes into great detail regarding the life and times of Jack Molinas and his effect on the world of Basketball in the early fifties. I was a High School Classmate of Mr. Molinas so the book was of great interest to me. He was an exceptional player and met a tragic end most likely due to his earlier gambling connections.

Sometimes you wonder if he was a real person or a figure straight out of a Damon Runyon story. Jack Molinas was as gifted as he was flawed, with a brilliant mind and outstanding physical abilities undermined by a brilliantly corrupt and outstandingly amoral soul. His effect on college basketball was ruinous and it took him one year to get drummed out of the NBA in the latter stages of a "Rookie of the Year" worthy season, sending him into a lifetime of scheming, prison stints, broken promises and ultimately an early violent death that you could see coming. There are reviewers here questioning the veracity of Rosen's story and while I'm in no position to confirm or challenge them, I have to recognize them. A twisted character like Molinas, to whom truth was but a vapor, would be harder to pin down than nailing jello to a wall so I would advise readers that the truth will never be known. Having said that, Charley tells a great tale and maintains a guarded respect for his subject, resulting in a great bio for perhaps the most shadowy figure in basketball history. I do wish Charley would've gone into more detail on which other NBA players accused of shaving points or worse were quietly pushed out of the league after Molinas' exit, but a libel suit could really dampen those royalties so I understand. I feel pretty sure of a couple of players and suspect two or three more, but

(like Molinas himself) who really knows? I gave this four stars because I'm not convinced the content is 100% accurate, which you want in a bio, but I don't blame the author and the book is worth getting just for the sheer story interpolating talent, intrigue and betrayal: Perfect material for one of those Eighties nighttime soaps like "Dynasty" or "Falcon Crest," but with Runyon writing the screenplay.

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