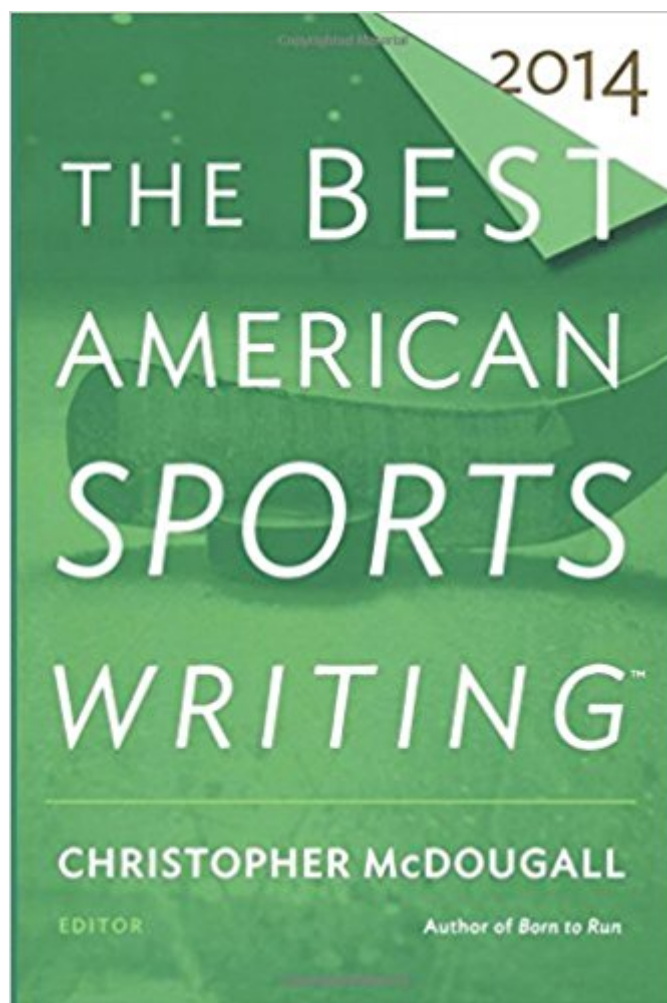


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# The Best American Sports Writing 2014



## Synopsis

"Excellent . . . A no-brainer pickup for the sports collection." -- Booklist "An affirmation of the strong state of American sportswriting." -- Kirkus Reviews From more than 350 national, regional, and specialty publications and, increasingly, top online publishers, Christopher McDougall, best-selling author of *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*, hand-selected the very best sports journalism of the past year.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mariner paperback, 2013, previous ISBN 978-0-547-88460-8

The Best American Series Today, most long-form journalism is passed over in favor of catchy numbered lists, leaving only the truly exceptional. That's what best-selling author Christopher McDougall has collected here, in the twenty-fourth edition of the renowned anthology *The Best American Sports Writing*. This year's compilation celebrates wonderfully diverse facets of the world of sports: Don Van Natta Jr.'s discovery of Bobby Riggs's love for Billie Jean King, Bucky McMahon's exploration of the uneasy relationship between surfers and sharks on Rialto Union, and Amanda Hess's light-touch homage to the sports bra. These varied pieces allow the reader to see beyond the final scores to the people who give meaning to the game. *The Best American Sports Writing 2014* includes Don Van Natta Jr., Ian Frazier, Amanda Hess, Ben McGrath, Nick Paumgarten, Charles P. Pierce, Eli Saslow, Patrick

Hruby, Mary Pilon, and others[INSERT AUTHOR PHOTO] CHRISTOPHER MCDUGALL, guest editor, is the best-selling author of *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* and the forthcoming *Natural Born Heroes: A World War II Odyssey*. GLENN STOUT, series editor, is the author, editor, or ghostwriter of nearly eighty books, including the best-selling *Fenway 1912*, *Red Sox Century*, and *Yankees Century*. He's been the series editor of *The Best American Sports Writing* since its inception in 1991.

While I'm a fan of "The Best" series of anthologies (*The Best Short Stories*, *The Best Essays*, etc), I've never had a special interest in athletics. This collection changed my mind and skewered my assumptions about what constitutes "sports writing." I was taken aback by the story, "The Case Against High School Sports, a probing examination of how academics may suffer when high school students - and their parents- care more about athletics than classwork. And then there is the piece entitled "The Choice" focusing on the dangers of football for children and teens. "The Match Maker" evoked memories of the Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs tennis match while giving me a whole new perspective on that moment in sports history. "The Chaos of the Dice" revealed the skill needed to join the elite world of championship backgammon players. Every piece in this collection is superb.

I am a great fan of these year-end compilation books which pass along to us some of the year's best reporting and writing. Unless we made our living tracking the dynamic of the modern periodical, this is material that we would likely miss. Mr McDougall is a new name to me and I guess I question some of his selections. Many of the pieces are about competitions we might consider "off-beat", and while I found the topics fascinating, I thought the writing and narrative skill of the authors a step down from some of the great pieces I've read in past editions of the series.

This series is always good. While it is probably rightly slanted in the direction of feature stories, I would like to see more inclusions of event reporting. I still remember being moved in the direction of sports writing by Rick Reilly's SI piece on the 1986 Masters--it was a report of the actual sports event and certainly would have deserved a place in a BASW edition, as would have many event reports through the years. One last thing: Very fun to read in Glenn Stout's foreword the impact this book has had on aspiring writers through the years. I can see why!

I have been reading this series for about 15 years. About five years ago, the series seemed to move towards "issues" where each editor wanted to make a political or societal statement. That is fine, but

it is not why I started reading the series. I kept reading, though. This year was different, though -- the stories just were generally not interesting or inspiring to me.

I heard about this book on a weekly radio show on NPR, Only A Game. I was initially drawn to it because of the number of years Mr. McDougall has been compiling these stories. I enjoyed every story, some more than others, and learned a great deal about both well-known and little-known sports figures. I plan to purchase the 2015 edition when it's available.

An entertaining collection of stories across a wide range of sports, exposing a personal, human side to a variety of athletes, their backgrounds and challenges faced and, in some cases, overcome.

Always an entertaining and enlightening collection of a wide range of sports stories. This one no exception.

You may have read some of these pieces before, but they are worth a second read. You will come across something about sports that you do not know before.

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