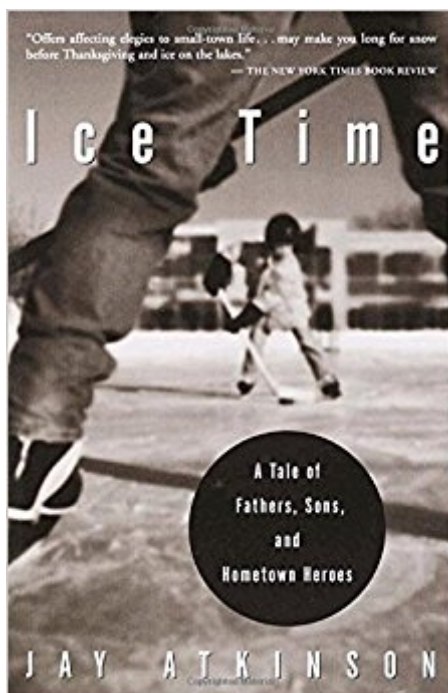


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# Ice Time: A Tale Of Fathers, Sons, And Hometown Heroes



## Synopsis

As kids, we all had passions -- something we loved doing, experienced with our friends, dreamed about every spare moment. For Jay Atkinson, who grew up in a small Massachusetts town, it was hockey. When Bobby Orr scored the winning goal in the 1970 Stanley Cup Finals against the St. Louis Blues, Atkinson became a fan for life. In 1975, he played on the first Methuen Rangers varsity hockey team. Once and always a rink rat, Atkinson still plays hockey whenever and wherever he can. Twenty-five years after he played for the Rangers, Atkinson returns to his high school team as a volunteer assistant. *Ice Time* tells the team's story as he follows the temperamental star, the fiery but troubled winger, the lovesick goalie, the rookie whose father is battling cancer, and the "old school" coach as the Rangers make a desperate charge into the state tournament. In emotionally vivid detail, *Ice Time* travels into the rinks, schools, and living rooms of small-town America, where friendships are forged, the rewards of loyalty and perseverance are earned, and boys and girls are transformed into young men and women. Along the way, we also meet his five-year-old son, Liam, who is just now learning the game his father loves. Whether describing kids playing a moonlit game on a frozen swamp or the crucible of team tryouts and predawn bus rides that he endured himself, Atkinson carves out the drama of adolescence with precision and affection. He takes us onto the ice and into the heart of a town and a team as he explores the profound connection between fathers and sons, and what it means to go home again. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Until now, *The Game*, by Hall of Fame goaltender and president of the Toronto Maple Leafs Ken

Dryden, pretty much stood alone in the annals of great hockey writing. Finally, stiff competition comes from New England author Atkinson, whose year-long study of the high school hockey squad from his alma mater is a bona-fide masterpiece. Cynics might cringe at the Rockwellian town Atkinson describes; certainly it does seem odd in this day and age to follow the antics of some 20 teenagers without one mention of pregnancy, drug abuse or violence. Yet that is precisely the lush and heartwarming portrait Atkinson paints of his hometown of Methuen, Mass., a blue-collar Catholic town split between French Canadians and Italians, where hockey is the common language and obsession. The focal point of Atkinson's book is the game itself, which the author sees as a force of empowerment, family values and community, and most importantly, joy. He strives to share this joy with his five-year old son, Liam, whose pure glee at playing the game and worship of the teenaged players of Methuen High is palpable. Atkinson vividly illustrates the mental and emotional impact the sport has on its players and offers lucid descriptions of game action. The themes of the book may seem quaint hard work, dedication, fairness, faith, camaraderie but that does not in any way lessen its impact. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Widely published three-time Pushcart Prize nominee Atkinson tells the story of the Methuen High Rangers and their quest for the Massachusetts state championship in the 2001-2000 season. Although now a professor of English at Salem State College, Atkinson decided to return to his home community and become the assistant coach of the high school hockey team on which he had played 25 years earlier. This is an observant, evocative book for all readers who remember the days of playing shinny on a frozen pond from sunup to sundown and, if the moon was full, into the night or at least until your mom called you for dinner. Following a young team's single season, it is an emotionally charged, heart-warming tale of personal triumphs, both on and off the ice, of friendship, loyalty, perseverance, and dedicated parents. Many a small town in North America can share the same memories. Recommended. Larry R. Little, Penticton P.L., BC Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I don't really know what the Conn Smythe Trophy is- only hear them mention it during hockey highlights on TV. I never played hockey and I'm not a huge fan of the sport. But I am big fan of this book. What 40-ish guy hasn't thought that he could go out and still compete with high school athletes? One could say Ice Time is a nostalgic look at the past (Atkinson's HS memories), or a hopeful look into the future (his son's), but I say it is about being present. That is appreciating who

and where you are at the moment. Slowing life down and focusing on the present. There's lots of references to memories and how things come back to us, how much happens that seems significant at the time, but we never get the satisfaction of remembering it because it gets wiped from our brains. Chapter 25 where J.A. describes a Xmas eve jog around his childhood neighborhood is a great example. This whole chapter is masterful writing. Most of the book is. He slips into vain self-indulgence as he describes all the goals he scores and cheerleaders he dates but the good parts make it well worth it. In many of the hockey game descriptions, I had to skip ahead because I couldn't wait to see if the Rangers won or lost the game. 4 3/4 stars.

I guess I would be a bit biased, but this amazingly descriptive narrative really pulls you in to the book. My older brother Thom DeZenzo was one of the captains of the Methuen Hockey team in 2000 and I recall the author very vividly. It was at my house that the team dyed their hair bleach blonde. The author truly captured all aspects of a team I knew personally.

The book arrived early, but not in as good of a condition as hoped for. The book is great and a fast read.

My Irish mom, still back in Methuen with a few of my siblings, would surely cringe at me being referred to as the "Big, tough French guy" on page 31 of this fine book. At least Jay had the courtesy to leave my name out of it. I'm grateful, particularly since my recollection of the event in question is somewhat of a departure from his. No matter.... This is a fine read, and finer still as it captures so accurately the rabid fervor that is hockey in Methuen, my hometown. Though I had the pleasure of playing for the Rangers' archrival, Central Catholic, Jay and I did play together, along with Dave Martin and Dennis Dube, Bob O'Donnell, Tom McGurren, and a host of other hockey lunatics, for a couple of years on Herb Edwards's team, the Blues. It was a terrific time to be a teenager, without much of the madness that has somehow insinuated itself into youth sports today. Jay's memory is sharp (in most respects... :) and he's drawn the supporting cast in remarkably accurate detail. I can see our former teammate, the boisterous Dave Martin, exhorting his charges to dig deeper in an effort to get at the core of the game, which is all about stripping away the self to serve the greater good of the team. I can also, by the way, easily imagine Dave weedling in, as we used to say, with the officials. What a refreshing, uncomplicated, non-political book this is. No pronouncements, no agenda, other than "this is my memory of a wonderful time." When I find myself staying late, alone, at our local rink to shoot just one more bucket of pucks, I now

know I'm not alone, (and my 45 year old elbow also reminds of that the morning after). Somehow, though, I can't imagine not doing it, and it's nice to know that there are a bunch of "old guys" like myself doing the same thing back home. Thanks, Jay, for making it all so real again, and sorry, again, for the dust up that night in the Frost Arena, that hallowed hall of hockeydom. We had some fun. That "Big, Tough, French guy" (all 5'8" of me...), and former Central Catholic hockey captain, -Herve Pelletier

I got through the first 35 pages of this book and really couldn't take it anymore, I mean who cares. There is nothing compelling about this book and everything the author writes about is a reach into the boring bag. I mean I have a 6 year old in youth hockey who loves it but I am not crying in my cereal every morning before we go to the rink thinking about the grand majesty of the incredible bond we are building. I myself spent my youth learning hockey on outdoor rinks in Wisconsin, but who the hell cares. This book has got to be only interesting to people in a regional sense who grew up in New England and know of the Methuen area and it's sporting history. I have avoided this book in the past but got desperate for a hockey read and boy did I pay for it.

"The most ephemeral and intriguing aspect of hockey is its spontaneity; each rush down the ice blossoms into something different, a new constellation of passes and positioning that happens only once and then melts away, like a snowflake," writes Atkinson in this moving, hilarious and lovingly detailed story of a year in the working life of the Methuen (Massachusetts) High School hockey team. A gifted observer with an eye for character (as in, "Now, there's a character!"), he captures the players, coaches, school officials and parents around the team in living color and salty dialogue. In addition to that, he weaves in memories of his own time as a goalie for the same team 25 years earlier along with his hopes and dreams for his 5-year-old son Liam, whom he is just getting on the ice to participate in league hockey. The mix of spirited reporting and personal memoir, with its evident (but not sappy) love of the sport and everyone involved, is irresistible. For hockey fans, this is a must read. For those who love memoirs, this vivid chronicle of a place many have never been and may know nothing about is a beauty.

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