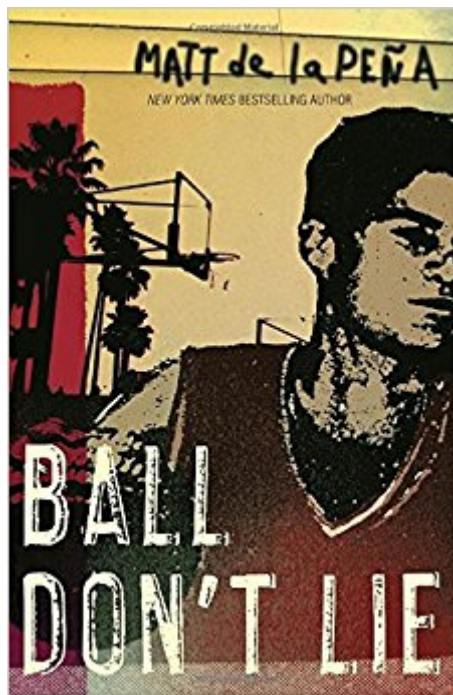


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# Ball Don't Lie



## Synopsis

Newbery Award-winning author Matt de la Peña's *Ball Don't Lie* about basketball "is a must-read." [The Bulletin] "Sticky is a beat-around-the-head foster kid with nowhere to call home but the street, and an outer shell so tough that no one will take him in. He started out life so far behind the pack that the finish line seems nearly unreachable. He's a white boy living and playing in a world where he doesn't seem to belong. But Sticky can ball. And basketball might just be his ticket out . . . if he can only realize that he doesn't have to be the person everyone else expects him to be." Matt de la Peña's breakout urban masterpiece, *Ball Don't Lie* takes place where the street and the court meet and where a boy can be anything if he puts his mind to it. [STAR] "[An] inspiring story. Sticky is a true original, and de la Peña has skillfully brought him to life." -School Library Journal, Starred "Riveting...Teens will be strongly affected by the unforgettable, distinctly male voice; the thrilling, unusually detailed basketball action; and the questions about race, love, self-worth, and what it means to build a life without advantages." -Booklist "Stunningly realistic, this book will hook older readers, especially urban teen males." -VOYA "The characters live and breath...This is a must-read." -The Bulletin "De la Peña does an excellent job of combining the streets with the sport. Gritty and mesmerizing." -Kirkus Reviews "I have never before seen blacktop ball depicted so well. In this novel, you will find its flash, its power, and its elegance without chains. This is powerful stuff." -Antawn Jamison, forward for the Los Angeles Clippers "From the very first sentence, this book grabbed me and didn't let go. The deeper I got into it, the more I felt like Sticky's story was my story. His heart, his handle, the guys in the gym, his potential pitfalls, his dreams. All of it. In a weird sense, this is my life." -Grayson Boucher ("The Professor") of the AND 1 Mix Tape Tour "Truly authentic in its examination of both the game I love and the invariable missteps toward manhood. You cannot fail to be moved by the eloquence and truth of this story." -Rick Fox, former forward for the Los Angeles Lakers An ALA Best Book for Young Adults An ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up *That white boy can ball*. He don't play like no regular white boy. Sticky, 17, has spent his life being abused by pimps living with his prostitute mother, bouncing from one foster home to another, and living on the street between failed placements. But he's developed incredible hoop skills that have given him considerable social standing among his mostly black peers. And he gets a girlfriend named Anh-thu, who loves him and wants to help him reach his dreams. Sticky sees basketball as his way out of his dead-end life and is determined to make the right moves in the game to attain his goal. But he doesn't quite know how to make the right moves in his life, until a bad decision leads him to confront dark secrets. Jumping back and forth in time, this first novel has a unique narrative voice that mixes street lingo, basketball jargon, and trash talk to tell Sticky's sorry saga from a variety of viewpoints. Although readers who are not familiar with basketball may have trouble following some of the detailed game action, even they will be involved in the teen's at once depressing and inspiring story. Sticky is a true original, and de la Peña has skillfully brought him to life. —Jack Forman, Mesa College Library, San Diego  
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Gr. 9-12. "I think God put me here to play ball," says 17-year-old Sticky. Shuffled between foster homes since childhood, the skinny, white teen devotes himself to playing basketball at Lincoln Rec, a gritty Los Angeles gym, where he has found a family among the serious players, mostly black men. In colloquial language filled with the words and rhythms of hip hop and the street, Pena's debut tells a riveting story about Sticky's struggle to secure a college basketball scholarship and deepen his relationship with his girlfriend. The disjointed narrative, which loops between past and present, may slow a few readers. Others, though, will see the nonlinear story as a reflection of Sticky's own internal journey as he faces violent childhood tragedies, his numbed emotions, and his sometimes-compulsive behavior (he repeats actions such as shoe-tying until they feel right). Teens

will be strongly affected by the unforgettable, distinctly male voice; the thrilling, unusually detailed basketball action; and the questions about race, love, self-worth, and what it means to build a life without advantages. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Matt De La Peña is a genius. This is not the first book I read from this author, and I have to say I'm impressed by his writing. "Ball Don't Lie" presents a story so unique both in the main character and in the form of narrative, that I found myself wishing for the book not to end. Sticky is a character that is incredibly likeable and so imperfectly awesome that I wish I knew him in real life. De la Peña has a way of developing his characters and making them so believable that is unprecedented, as you find yourself quickly absorbed to the character's thoughts and feelings. In this particular book, you find a deeply troubled young man who tries to overcome his problems any way that he can, and finds in the game of basketball an escape from the bleak reality that is his life. While we navigate (beautifully, I might add) the events that shaped Sticky's life, it is impossible not to be moved by the power in De la Peña's writing, as well as the crude situations Sticky has been through in this young life. There are parts in the book - specially the scenes in Lincoln Rec and the discussions of its frequent players - that are simply hilarious, and made me laugh out loud for days. The description of the basketball scenes is also brilliant and rich, and I found myself wanting to play basketball on a frequent basis after reading this. All in all, a fantastic read (I read this book 7 times, and it gets better every time), one of the best in my life, in fact.

"I could tell you a lot about this game...."How a dark gym like Lincoln Rec is a different world. Full of theft and dunk, smooth jumpers and fragile egos. Full of its own funky politics and stratification. Music bleeding out of old rattling speakers from open to close. Old rhythm and blues. Stevie Wonder. Aretha Franklin. Funk. Motown. Marvin Gaye. Sometimes Jimmy gets talked into hard-core rap on weekends. Or Trey sneaks in his three-year-old demo tape."Always music."There are fat rats that scurry through the lane on game point. Beady eyes on the man with the ball. There are roaches congregating under the bleachers."There is so much dust on the slick floor that sometimes guys will go to stop and slide right out of the gym. Every time there's a break in the action, ten guys put palm to sole for grip."There are a hundred different ways of talking and a thousand uses of the word motherf\_\_\_\_r."There are no women."In the winter there are so many homeless bodies spread out across court two you can hardly see the floor. There are leaks when it rains. Rusted pots are set out to collect heavy drops. Sometimes a guy will track in mud and everybody throws a fit. Jimmy sets

out a twenty-five-dollar heater and everybody puts their hands up to it before they play."Court one at Lincoln Rec is the epicenter of Sticky's life in L.A. and of his dreams for the future. Lincoln Rec is a constant for him, a positive one, unlike that series of light-colored minivans that have repeatedly arrived at the group home over the years carrying foster parents who pick him up, make him big promises about a real home...promises that for various reasons always go up in smoke and leave him, once again, chillin' back at the group home.Court one is where he, a seventeen-year-old white boy, builds his skills playing an extremely physical style of pickup basketball with an assortment of tough, older black guys. On court one, where either you are seriously in the zone or you're spending all day with your butt in the bleachers, Sticky is determined to play and win.As Dante, a former pro player and a regular at Lincoln Rec explains to him, Sticky has started the "life being a race" thing "three stones back." Not only has Sticky had to deal with the failings of his drug-addicted, prostitute mother and, later, with those repeated rejections by foster parents, but he also has "that mental thing, where you gotta do stupid stuff over and over and over." The depictions of Sticky's frequent ritualistic behaviors, revealing his struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, are agonizing. But, ironically, it is that same compulsion that keeps him so focused on constantly perfecting his skills, whether they be related to basketball or to other, less noble, pursuits."Won't you help me girlJust as soon as you can?"--Al GreenThere's the bright high school girl with the beautiful green eyes, Anh-thu, who works in Miller's Outpost. Sticky meets her one day when he drops in there to steal some new pants. "Annie" seems able to see through the hard shell to the real Sticky.The story bounces back and forth from Lincoln Rec to scenes of Sticky's early days with his mother, the different experiences with foster families, playing J.V. hoops at school, hanging out partying with the guys, and being with Anh-thu. All together, there must be a hundred different characters we meet, and each one is unique and memorable. A number of those characters are homeless, some sleeping on cardboard on court two, others in a public toilet somewhere. Sticky's world is on the underbelly side of L.A. And regularly we get glimpses of the "other world" in the form of faceless businessmen who come walking in on their lunch break to watch what's going on and then return to their offices to tell their co-workers about the games, the fights, and, undoubtedly, about the skinny white kid with the moves."Rob's weight is on the back of his heels on defense. Waiting."The face rattles off truth in situations like this. Fear flickering in Rob's wide eyes: Get too close and Sticky sticks a jumper in his eye. Too many possibilities when the man with the ball gets to say which way and when, how fast and for how long. And you can multiply all that by ten if the guy can play. Get busted on in front of everybody. Get dragged all game by the skinny white kid everybody talks about."All the loudmouths on the sideline are at full attention."Sticky jab-steps right and pulls back,

keeps his dribble."Rob retreats."Sticky is: through the legs, around the back, playing hoops with a yo-yo. Walk the dawg when everybody calls for a trick. Hold the ball too long."He is: stolen Nike shoes, stolen mesh shorts, ankle socks. Back and forth handling the ball, knees bent, his eyes in Rob's eyes. Piss off the old purists who cry for a return to fundamentals. The ones who've lost so much vision they're blind to the dance of it all. The spin move like a skirt lifting pirouette on calloused toes. The dip. Jump shot splashing through the net like a perfect dismount."A damaged white teenager, a bunch of tough black "ballers," a dark rec center in L.A., and the girl with the eyes come together to make this gritty, urban story a powerful, rhythmic read. The thrumming beats and the sweat dripping out from between the pages also place author Matt de la Pena squarely in contention for Rookie of the Year honors.You'll see this on my Best of 2005 list later this year.

My son enjoyed the book.

Fast paced and creative, the characters leap out at you and their personalities linger after the book is done. I want more of de la Pena's work. The book puts you there in the impossible to fathom life of Sticky, the seventeen year old main character. The book puts you there in the rec where he plays basketball with a passion and precision that buys his way into the heart of the gym, the regulars who become family. Sticky battles the right choices in a world with so many wrongs. The end turns furious. It sounds trite but I didn't want to put it down.

I do not want it, I accidentally ordered this. Do not charge me please, Thank You.

Very good book. Engaging!

Unique style of writing -- the author moves back and forth with the main character. It's about basketball but also about a young mans life and how he came to be where he is in his life

Ok book.

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