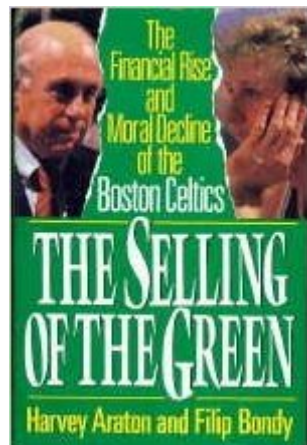




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The Selling Of The Green: The Financial Rise And Moral Decline Of The Boston Celtics



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Customer Reviews

Although Boston is 25% black, it has a reputation as a racist city; also relevant to the premise of the book is the fact that the basketball Celtics, one of professional sports' most successful franchises, have few fans among the city's minority population. The Celtics management has tried for four decades to create the image that it is color-blind: the team signed the first black player, hired the first black coach and the Celtics were the first to play an all-black starting lineup. But the image is not the reality, according to New York Times sports columnists Araton and Bondy in this hard-hitting expose. The Celtics, originally led to greatness by black center Bill Russell, prefer to make a public hero of white forward John Havlicek; for years the management has tried to assemble a roster of six blacks and six whites, although some of the whites are talented enough only to sit on the bench. The authors maintain that racism is endemic in the NBA and that it is especially blatant in Boston. They also argue convincingly that the Boston press has played a shameful role in cloaking that the Celtics team is "still for whites." Photos not seen by PW. Author tour. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Two New York Times columnists take the NBA's Boston Celtics front office to task for what they charge is a race-based marketing strategy that permeates nearly all management functions, from player development to community relations. Based largely on interviews with former players, they claim the practice has been long-standing and has resulted in preferential treatment for white players, particularly in regard to salary negotiations and roster moves. Much of the criticism is directed at Red Auerbach, the architect of the Celtic dynasty, as well as NBA officials and the local

Boston media, who are seen as catering to the franchise. This work is likely to beget controversy and offers a far different perspective of the team from that depicted in Dan Shaughnessy's *Ever Green* (LJ 9/15/90) or Bob Ryan's *The Boston Celtics* (LJ 11/15/89). For popular collections.-
William H. Hoffman, Ft. Myers-Lee Cty. P.L., Fla. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I am a lifelong Celtics fan of 45 years and counting. They are my beloved home town team, however it's always been clear the favoritism shown towards the white players by most of the local media and most of the Boston sports fans. There exists a double standard as to how the black players were and in some cases still are treated vs the white players. Outstanding job by the writers in researching and putting together an outstanding book. When this book came out in the early 1990s I immediately dismissed it because the local Boston media trashed it and never gave it a chance. But now over 20 years later I gave it a fair chance and agree with over 90% of it. Every sports fan should read this book objectively. I know I will probably get ripped for writing this review but have to tell it like it is.

The Boston Celtics are a legendary team. Harvey Araton knows hoops and is fair in his commentary. Worth the buy.

Harvey Araton is a fine journalist with an eye for detail and context. His journalistic observations are often penetrating and well worth consideration. I've read parts of *DRIVING MISTER YOGI* in pre-publication excerpts (it's not out yet) and *WHEN THE GARDEN WAS EDEN* from cover to cover. Both are terrific reads. The latter is one of the best sports books I've ever read. So, Araton's participation in the writing of *THE SELLING OF THE GREEN* with Filip Bondy (whose other work I don't know) marks a departure from his usual good sense. Perhaps the result of a youthful lack of impulse control. Then again, this might be a diatribe fueled by an understandable animus for Red Auerbach, the brilliant but flawed human being who has been rightly lauded for his remarkable accomplishments, but remembered also for his, belligerence, his self-satisfied braggadocio and a crude tendency to (almost literally) blow smoke into the faces of vanquished opponents. I can relate to such feelings although I don't share them. Still, this book, simply put, comes close to slander and bull-headedly dismisses considerations that should convince any sensible person that its main claims are manifestly false. Certainly Boston is a city whose history is besmirched by ugly racism - especially during, but not restricted to, the 1970's. It has suffered a deservedly negative reputation for this. The reasons for this are various and have been much studied and commented upon by

persons who know a lot more about it than the authors of this book. In brief, Araton and Bundy somehow manage to conflate the racial attitudes of Boston during the '70's with those of the Boston Celtics organization of the 1980's. While there is no doubt that the 80's Celtics, with an unusual plethora of white stars, held a special appeal for racists in Boston and elsewhere, it is pure fantasy to think that the Celtics organization made their decisions in order to gain such appeal. Red Auerbach, the architect of many great Celtics teams from the 1950's to the 1980's had many faults and - probably deservedly - his share of enemies, but it is preposterous to see him as a racist or as a person who would even use racist attitudes to his advantage. Bill Russell, a man of great intelligence and fierce racial pride has said as much. For me this alone serves as a refutation of much of Araton and Bundy's case. Against a massive preponderance contrary of evidence which they either ignore or dimly try to explain away, Araton and Bundy, make the specious and ridiculously selective claim that Auerbach and the Celtics organization played to the still potent racist attitudes within their city during the 80's. The authors' main claims however, cannot stand up to the following indisputable facts: 1) The Boston Celtics, under the decades long leadership of Red Auerbach, very much unlike their baseball Red Sox counterparts, were pioneers in attracting and signing black players. 2) Unlike other NBA teams, the Auerbach Celtics broke with the early, unwritten "quota" system for blacks. They were the first team to start five black players. 3) The Celtics and Auerbach were the first team to hire a black man as coach - Bill Russell in 1966. 4) The supposedly racist Celtics organization of the 1980s, still masterminded by Auerbach, had a black coach, K C Jones, leading its racially mixed stars. 5) The Celtics were, at the time this book was written, the only team to have won NBA Championships under two different black coaches - both chosen by Red Auerbach. This remains true today, although the Celtics have now won NBA Championships under THREE different black coaches! (Bill Russell, K C Jones and Doc Rivers) This is a racist organization? 6) Although the Celtics of the eighties had more white players than many NBA teams, the great majority of them - including Larry Bird, Kevin McHale, Bill Walton, Danny Ainge and Scott Wedman were great players. The first three are Hall of Famers, the other two, All-Stars. (What team would NOT have wanted players of this caliber?; their acquisition was the result of shrewd talent evaluation and trading, not racism.) 7) Events subsequent to the writing of this book seriously call into question the book's claims. How might Araton and Bundy now respond to the fact that the Celtics championship team of 2008, a team that started five black players and was spearheaded by three black superstars was carefully put together by a Celtics organization which continued the philosophy of Red Auerbach? Or that this team was thoroughly embraced by its city and fans? Or that its black coach, Doc Rivers is one of the city's most beloved figures? Red

Auerbach could be a jerk. As an old Knicks fan, it is not easy for me to defend him here. Still, he had many virtues that this book either fails to address or does so grudgingly. There's plenty there to criticize without going over the line. This is a book that is best forgotten.

To put it kindly, authors Araton and Bondy need to do a little soul-searching and examine their own motives for creating this smear-campaign of a book. I find it hard to believe that two otherwise respected sports journalists would allow to have their names attached to this. The basic premise of the book holds forth that the Celtics organization is a racist organization that caters to a racist Boston fan base and is abetted by a racist local press. Well, let's not apply too broad a brush here! The book then goes on to recount every personnel and organizational decision the Celtics have ever made, always in unflattering racial terms. Well, let's see... how do I say this? OK, here goes. Fellas, aren't you just a little bit bitter that the Celtics have had such huge success over the years, often in embarrassing fashion over your own favorite teams (Syracuse Nats, New York Knicks, Phil. 76's)? Doesn't it bug you that your hated rival has again and again built champion-caliber squads with players that were allowed to slip through the cracks by less astute competitors? Don't you feel just a little bit foolish about having written this juvenile ill-informed diatribe and not gotten the least amount of attention? Sure you do. And in the process, you flushed any journalistic integrity you might have had down the drain. Congratulations, authors Araton and Bondy.

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