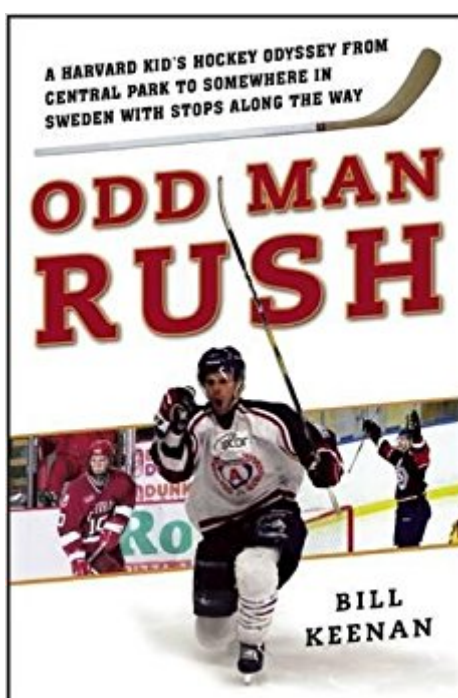


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Odd Man Rush: A Harvard Kid's Hockey Odyssey From Central Park To Somewhere In Sweden With Stops Along The Way



Synopsis

In his hilarious, gritty, and touching debut, Bill Keenan's a hockey star once on the fast-track to the NHL; tells of how he overcame multiple obstacles to find fulfillment and redemption in the strange world of European minor-league professional hockey. Keenan's hockey obsession begins as a five-year-old on Lasker Rink in New York's Central Park's love at first stride, as he calls it. He then becomes the youngest, and skinniest, player on the New York Bobcats, a Junior B hockey team. Later, after his hockey career at Harvard doesn't end as planned; with a fat NHL contract; Keenan decides to play in the minor leagues in Europe, where the glamour of professional sports is decidedly lacking. Part fish-out-of-water travelogue, part coming-of-age memoir, *Odd Man Rush* will capture the interest of not just hockey fans, but also fans of good writing. Throughout, Keenan's deep affection for the game shines through, even as he describes fans who steal players' clothes from the locker room or toss empty beer cans onto the rink after games. Abusive fans, cold showers, long bus rides; nothing diminishes his love for the sport. "Because that's the way it works with me and hockey. Even when it's horrible, it's wonderful." Skyhorse Publishing, as well as our Sports Publishing imprint, are proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in sports; books about baseball, pro football, college football, pro and college basketball, hockey, or soccer, we have a book about your sport or your team. Whether you are a New York Yankees fan or hail from Red Sox nation; whether you are a die-hard Green Bay Packers or Dallas Cowboys fan; whether you root for the Kentucky Wildcats, Louisville Cardinals, UCLA Bruins, or Kansas Jayhawks; whether you route for the Boston Bruins, Toronto Maple Leafs, Montreal Canadiens, or Los Angeles Kings; we have a book for you. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to publishing books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked by other publishers and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

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Customer Reviews

"In this uproarious new memoir, a New York-raised hockey phenom high-sticks his way from youth camps to the Ivy League to the frozen purgatory of Europe's minor leagues, rubbing shoulder pads with All-Stars, has-beens, and a horde of hostile Germans along the way." -Vanity Fair "Ball Four"™ meets hockey; slap shots abound -The Buffalo News "Last time I saw Billy, he stepped on a puck at Harvard practice and almost took my head off with his stick when he fell. His writing won't hurt you, but it will make you laugh." -Alex Killorn, forward, Tampa Bay Lightning "Giving us more than a hockey book, Bill Keenan fills an arena with wit, passion, and good old story-telling. Both exotic and at the same time homespun and heartfelt, Keenan's story captures the fear and awkwardness of a stranger in a strange land. This guy has been there and the details are just right." -Bill Gaston, author of six short-story collections, five books including *Midnight Hockey*, and winner of the CBC Canadian Literary Award, the National Magazine award, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and the Victoria Book Prize "From the prestige of Harvard NCAA to the humbling European minor leagues, an honest and often hilarious look at a side of the hockey world that is not very well known and rarely written about." -Neil Smith, President and G.M. of the 1994 Stanley Cup Champion New York Rangers, and current NHL analyst for Rogers Sportsnet "This might be Bill Keenan's first book--but it won't be his last. His bang-on descriptions of the characters he played with and the coaches he toiled under will literally have you laughing out loud. Even if you've never been to the leafy Ivy League, or tried to score on (or off!) the ice in Sweden, he has you skating right along with him. One of the best hockey memoirs out there--Keenan definitely scores on this *Odd Man Rush*." -Deb Placey, NHL Network and MSG Network hockey host "An uproarious new memoir..." -Vanity Fair "Keenan's life story proves a journeyman's journey makes for one great read. . . He was a minor-leaguer, but his storytelling is major league." -Sal Barry, *The Hockey News* It would be one thing had Keenan made it as an NHLer. That he did not makes "Odd Man Rush" a unique item on the bookshelf. Keenan puts a name, face, and voice to the majority "the grinders who, despite their singular passion for the sport, do not advance to its highest level...Keenan understands the culture and captures it well. - The Boston Globe

Bill Keenan played hockey at Harvard University from 2005 to 2008 and professionally in Europe from 2009 to 2012. He no longer plays the game but still has hockey hair. He is currently pursuing his MBA at Columbia Business School and lives in New York City.

While Vanity Fair, which published an excerpt of this book online, is correct in describing Odd Man Rush as an uproarious memoir, it's way more than that. The book is about dreams, about pain, about the limits of desire and hard work, about the pressure of time, about timelessness. There is this wise, melancholy strain running through it; like a clock ticking. Like this, from page 172: There's a timelessness to the hockey world, something that keeps those playing pure and innocent. But the clock is always ticking. We work to score goals, stopping the clock momentarily. We harness time in the plays we make, the plays we practice over and over and over to get right. But the moments are fleeting; the memories are what we play for. Or this, later on, near the end, part of a conversation between the author and a teammate: You ever think about what would happen if you were better? [the teammate asks.] What do you mean? [the author replies] Better at hockey. Whether we like it or not, the hard work s*** only gets you so far. Bottom line is there's s*** we can't control. I just wish I were better. That exchange stopped me dead in my tracks; it's so indescribably sad and true----- about many, many things in life, not just in hockey. Truth. Which is pretty much the hallmark of this book. The author's gaze never looks away. The book is filled with conversations that are pitch-perfect and real, which is no small accomplishment; really good writers often founder there. It's a story that FLIES along, as if on skates, told in a rush (no pun intended) like someone getting a long-bottled-up story off his chest and wanting to make absolutely sure that there is nothing, not one single moment of dishonesty in the telling. I finished the book two days ago; I couldn't put it down and now I can't get it out of my mind. Which is pretty much what you want in a book, right? Sticks with you. Read it; you'll see.

This is one of the better hockey books out there. But it covers so much more than hockey. It's really a quest book. In Bill Keenan's case, instead of the grail it is a shot at high level pro hockey. It touches on the lengths we will go to pursue our dreams and does it with a great combination of humor and emotion. Keenan does not take himself too seriously while also finding the beauty in sports - be it the passion of fans, the bonds between teammates or the humor of a locker room or bus ride. If you've ever played on a team you'll recognize some of the characters he encounters at Harvard or in Belgium, Germany or Sweden. And when you finish it you are left missing the likes of

"Mother Russia," "Chara," and Dean -- and you wonder what Erika thinks of it all. It's a touching and at times hilarious story.

It's rare to find a person with enviable talents and accomplishments who is also self-assured enough to approach life with genuine modesty and humorous self-deprecation. In Bill Keenan's case, we're fortunate that one of these talents is the ability to write about his adventures in the uncharted world of hockey in a way that keeps the reader laughing as they cheer for Negative Game to put one in the net.

The book is about a dream and the hard work it takes to keep it alive. The dream is to be a pro hockey player. The author knows it is highly unlikely that he will ever play in a NHL game but is willing to do what it takes to try. The author does a fantastic job telling his story with a good balance of on ice and off ice stories. This is not War and Peace but a good light read, written with a sense of humor. The stories about his teammates are often hilarious. What I liked was he never played the "what if card". Did not dwell on how his career could have been different if the injuries at Harvard did not happen. A good first book from a budding author. Looking to find out what happened next in his life and career. Besides the stories about youth hockey on Long Island brought back memory of my youth playing at some of the same rinks. Nostalgia to me.

A few months ago I read a snippet of this book in Vanity Fair and immediately put it on my "to read" list. Having grown up playing youth hockey with NHL and college hockey dreams, I found the material right up my alley (I never lived that life, so to read it was great). I was even shocked to see some old familiar names from my time as a Squirt and Pee Wee on Long Island. Bill Keenan proves to be a sharp witted guy, who you can tell would have been a great teammate. He has a very self deprecating sense of humor that I found very funny. His stories from Lasker, to Harvard, to Belgium, Sweden and beyond made for some great reading and laugh out loud laughs. I found the book to be very enjoyable to read and I hope the author keeps up with the writing.

Bill Keenan's ability to paint a picture with words is truly a gift. The way he chronicles his experiences both on and off the ice make you feel like you are right there with him. Whether it's in the living room at his family home, dancing at a night club in a European city, or waiting along the boards awaiting a pass as a member of his team, you feel like you are really there with him and that is something not all writers can get across in their books. As you read through the book, you end up

wanting to give Bill a big hug for all the hardships he had to overcome. I greatly enjoyed hearing about his experiences with Adam Graves (even though I am a Pittsburgh Penguins fan) and could identify with his injury struggles on a personal level as I had some of my own to deal with as a dancer. I am not ashamed to admit, I even shed a tear or two at the end of the book (because I am a sap like that). It is a reminder that no matter what the obstacle, we should never give up on a dream unless absolutely necessary to do so for...whatever reason. I sincerely hope that Mr. "Negative Game" will come out with more titles about his years in hockey and, thanks to him, I now want to go abroad to take in the different levels of hockey in Europe. Well done, Bill Keenan. I truly enjoyed every word.

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