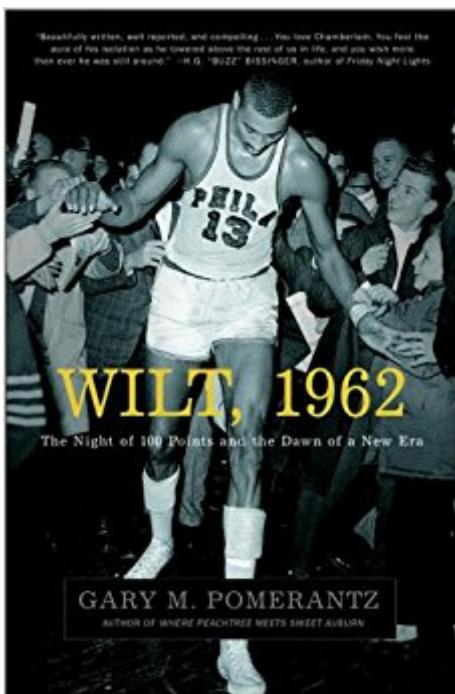


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Wilt, 1962: The Night Of 100 Points And The Dawn Of A New Era



Synopsis

On the night of March 2, 1962, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, right up the street from the chocolate factory, Wilt Chamberlain, a young and striking athlete celebrated as the Big Dipper, scored one hundred points in a game against the New York Knickerbockers. As historic and revolutionary as the achievement was, it remains shrouded in myth. The game was not televised; no New York sportswriters showed up; and a fourteen-year-old local boy ran onto the court when Chamberlain scored his hundredth point, shook his hand, and then ran off with the basketball. In telling the story of this remarkable night, author Gary M. Pomerantz brings to life a lost world of American sports. In 1962, the National Basketball Association, stepchild to the college game, was searching for its identity. Its teams were mostly white, the number of black players limited by an unspoken quota. Games were played in drafty, half-filled arenas, and the players traveled on buses and trains, telling tall tales, playing cards, and sometimes reading Joyce. Into this scene stepped the unprecedented Wilt Chamberlain: strong and quick-witted, voluble and enigmatic, a seven-footer who played with a colossal will and a dancer's grace. That strength, will, grace, and mystery were never more in focus than on March 2, 1962. Pomerantz tracked down Knicks and Philadelphia Warriors, fans, journalists, team officials, other NBA stars of the era, and basketball historians, conducting more than 250 interviews in all, to recreate in painstaking detail the game that announced the Dipper's greatness. He brings us to Hershey, Pennsylvania, a sweet-seeming model of the gentle, homogeneous small-town America that was fast becoming anachronistic. We see the fans and players, alternately fascinated and confused by Wilt, drawn anxiously into the spectacle. Pomerantz portrays the other legendary figures in this story: the Warriors' elegant coach Frank McGuire; the beloved, if rumpled, team owner Eddie Gottlieb; and the irreverent p.a. announcer Dave Zinkoff, who handed out free salamis courtside. At the heart of the book is the self-made Chamberlain, a romantic cosmopolitan who owned a nightclub in Harlem and shrugged off segregation with a bebop cool but harbored every slight deep in his psyche. March 2, 1962, presented the awesome sight of Wilt Chamberlain imposing himself on a world that would diminish him. Wilt, 1962 is not only the dramatic story of a singular basketball game but a meditation on small towns, midcentury America, and one of the most intriguing figures in the pantheon of sports heroes.

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Customer Reviews

I loved this book! Initially I thought -- no way would I read a book on Wilt and basketball history. Then, I stumbled across a two page preview in Parade Magazine and thought-this guy can write! Pomerantz' interesting storytelling immediately captivated me. The most compelling for me, a non basketball afficianiado, is how he took me right into the heart of the historical, cultural and race sensibilities through sports in the fifties and 60's and through this truly unparalleled player, Wilt. Add to this, now I have some sports legend history at my fingertips for conversations.

I was born and raised in Hershey, Pa., and worked as an usher at the Hershey Arena all through high school. I saw every sporting event in that remarkable little town throughout my life. But I missed that game. I was away at college, Wake Forest University, and missed the greatest night in the history of my hometown. Obviously, the story of this game, this player (the Warriors trained in Hershey as did the Eagles) and this town is very personal for me. Gary Pomerantz did an eloquent job of capturing the times, the player, the game and the town. He grasps the sensitivity of the social issues of the time (remember JFK's New Frontier was in full bloom) and the hearts and the minds of the people who lived. He describes with brilliance this innocent period and the bigger than life presence of Wilt Chamberlain, who dominated it and bent it to his will. This is a book of history, of sport and the civil rights movement and of a man who captured all of our imaginations until the day he left us. Ernie Accorsi
General Manager
New York Giants

What a lost treasure. I just finished reading Wilt, 1962. What great insight into a lost era of the NBA. Growing up, Wilt was one of my favorite players. I thought I knew everything about him and his history. Boy! Was I wrong. Wilt. 1962 gives great insight into not only "The 1st big fella", but also

what the NBA was like back in the early days. The writer, Gary Pomerantz, does a great job of putting you right there in those old damp, dusty arenas, on the bus trips and the nightlife that surrounded the Big Dipper in his hey day. It was a fast read and highly recommended reading for any sports or history fan.ls.chicago

I admit I had reservations about ordering "Wilt, 1962." I enjoyed and Pomerantz's other books--"Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn" and "Nine Minutes, Twenty Seconds"--but I had no interest in professional basketball. None. But my admiration of Pomerantz's other works overcame my initial hesitations and I bought it. I'm glad I did because "Wilt, 1962" is about much more than a historic night in sports. It brings to life a time period in recent American history that we wouldn't recognize today. I finished it in a day!Two things made "Wilt, 1962" compelling--Pomerantz's skill as a researcher and his talent as a writer. In his previous books Pomerantz mastered the details of everything from the residential patterns of segregated Atlanta to the "peen-ing" of the blades of airplane propeller and he brings the same "total immerson" style to "Wilt, 1962" with startling results. He learned how some NBA players defended the Big Dipper by receiving an elbow in the back. Pomerantz, however, is more than a master details--he is also a talented writer. Pomerantz weaves his telling details in a way that resurrects an NBA that needed exhibition games by NFL players to draw a couple thousand fans, to describe the Harlem nightclub scene that was in its twilight and, most importantly, to bring Wilt, a man who's life and memory are now shadows and stereotypes, to life.

The author did a great job in describing the details, background and excitement surrounding this great and unique event. His discussion of the game made me feel as if I was right there in the Hershey arena. But I especially liked his discussion of the Warriors' and Knicks' players both during the game and then looking back many years later. The NBA environment at the time, including the racial environment and apparent quotas was also discussed. I am old enough to remember the NBA at the time and many of the players as well as the event. I remember when Wilt appeared on the Sunday Ed Sullivan show to be congratulated. Various aspects of Wilt's life are presented in a very interesting way. Even the controversy of the game ball is described. A great read and very worthwhile to buy.Dipper Dunk.

Mr. Pomerantz has written a cultural snapshot of America by focusing on a single NBA game in 1962. Back when the NBA was a very distant third to baseball and football on the national scene, he

has extensively researched the "away" game between the Knicks and the Warriors in Hersey, Pa. There was no television coverage and the only preservation of the 100 point performance of Wilt was a ham radio operator who started his recording late in the game. "Wilt, 1962" is an examination of race in the days of unofficial quotas, of sportsmanship where the Knicks felt that the Warriors were running up the score, and of team versus individual stardom. By the fourth quarter, the two teams were engaged in intense physical combat and intentionally fouling each other: the Knicks in an attempt to keep Wilt from scoring (he was a horrible foul shooter who had the night of his life by going 28 for 32 from the line) and by the Warriors who were trying to help Wilt when the Knicks started to play "stall ball." Wilt made his 100th point in the final minute of play as the Warriors won, 169-147. This is not a full biography of Wilt but a story of an era captured within a single game. "Wilt, 1962" is similar in tone to Frank Fitzpatrick's study of the 1966 NCAA title game between the all-black starting five from Texas Western and the all-white squad from Kentucky in "And The Walls Came Tumbling Down" (2000). It is readable as a history lesson disguised as a sports story.

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