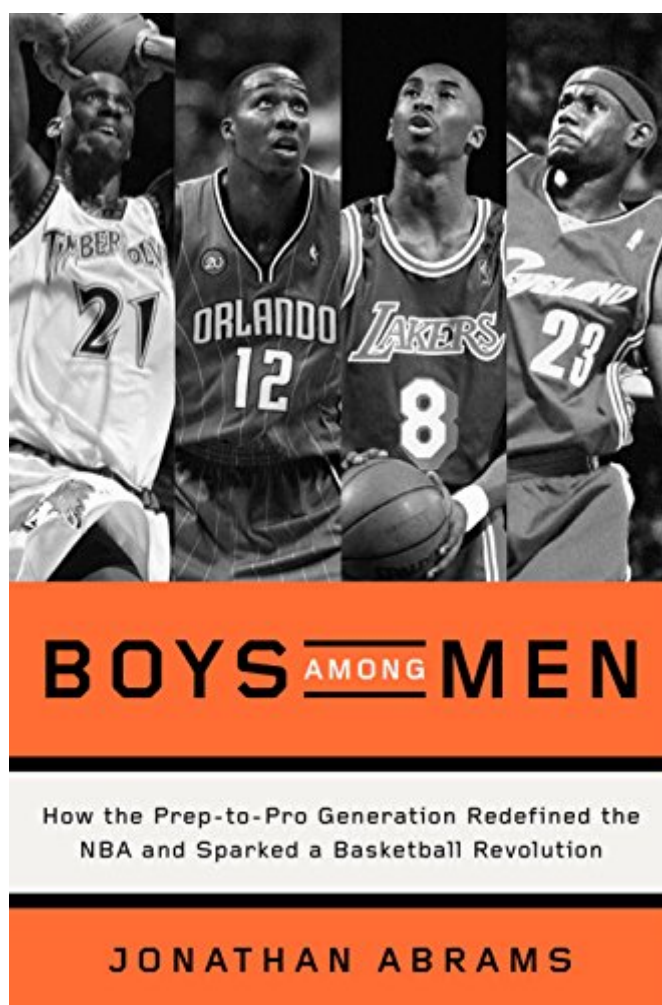


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Boys Among Men: How The Prep-to-Pro Generation Redefined The NBA And Sparked A Basketball Revolution



Synopsis

The definitive, never-before-told story of the prep-to-pro generation, those basketball prodigies who from 1995 to 2005 made the jump directly from high school to the NBA. When Kevin Garnett shocked the world by announcing that he would not be attending college as young basketball prodigies were expected to do but instead enter the 1995 NBA draft directly from high school, he blazed a trail for a generation of teenage basketball players to head straight for the pros. That trend would continue until the NBA instituted an age limit in 2005, requiring all players to attend college or another developmental program for at least one year. Over that decade-plus period, the list of players who made that difficult leap includes some of the most celebrated players of the modern era—Garnett, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, Dwight Howard, Tracy McGrady, and numerous other stars. It also includes notable busts—who either physically or mentally proved unable to handle the transition. But for better or for worse, the face of the NBA was forever changed by the prep-to-pro generation. In compelling, masterfully crafted prose, *Boys Among Men* goes behind the scenes and draws on hundreds of firsthand interviews to paint insightful and engaging portraits of the most pivotal figures and events during this time. Award-winning basketball writer Jonathan Abrams has obtained remarkable access to the key players, coaches, and other movers and shakers from that time, and the result is a book packed with rare insights and never-before-published details about this chapter in NBA history. *Boys Among Men* is a thrilling, informative, must-read for any basketball fan.

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Customer Reviews

This April will mark the 10th anniversary of when the NBA set their current age limit of 19, effectively banning the practice of players jumping directly from high school to the pros. Unless Gerald Green has a late-career renaissance or something we all have a decent idea of how these prep-to-pro players have generally panned out in the pros. The route has yielded some major hits (Moses Malone, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James) and misses (Lenny Cooke, Taj McDavid), though a 2004 study conducted by Michael A. McCann of Harvard Law School found that such players enjoyed longer careers and larger contracts than their (at least semi-)college educated counterparts. While we can debate about whether this age-limitless-era was good or bad for basketball and the players that took advantage, these players undoubtedly had a huge impact on the game. In *Boys Among Men*, Grantland alumnus Jonathan Abrams chronicles the history of the prep-to-pro movement, from trailblazer Moses Malone in 1974 to Amir Johnson, the final high schooler selected in the 2005 Draft. Abrams' accounts of the players that took the plunge and how they influenced and were influenced by the evolution of the business and strategy of the sport make for remarkably compelling reading. Abrams mentions in the acknowledgements that his interest in the subject was peaked while working the Los Angeles Clippers beat right out of college. He was curious as to how these young players four years his junior handled playing in the NBA and handling the pressure and business of the sport (especially given that financial hardship is often one of the biggest reasons for high schoolers forgoing college). This curiosity frames his approach to *Boys Among Men*.

Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant, Tracy McGrady and LeBron James have earned superstar status in the NBA, and they all were drafted directly out of high school. Although Moses Malone went directly from high school to the ABA Utah Stars in 1974 and Bill Willoughby and Darryl Dawkins made the jump from high school to the NBA, it didn't become more acceptable to draft high school players until Kevin Garrett (first round pick in 1995) and Kobe Bryant (first round pick in 1996) became successful. Author Jonathan Abrams takes an in-depth look at how the influx of high school players has impacted the NBA. He writes that Garnett's success proved to be a blueprint for a new generation that would forsake college and become instant millionaires. • Making the adjustment to

the NBA, however, is filled with potential potholes for players who are extremely talented, but often lack the emotional and mental development. Abrams says high school players drafted by the NBA have two feet in the adult world, but have no clue what it means to be a man and to truly dedicate themselves to developing their talent. Despite the challenges, there are not as many failures as there are successes. Even if a high school player is moderately successful in the NBA, he will be a millionaire. Witness Kwane Brown (the first high school player drafted No. 1 by the NBA) and Eddie Curry. Brown earned \$60 million dollars over 13 fairly lackluster seasons, while Curry made \$70 million during 12 mostly ho-hum seasons. The influx of high school players caused the NBA to get too young, too fast. Many of the players lacked fundamental skills and never really developed. They were often resented by veterans and forced to the bench by coaches who were under pressure to win now.

I am not much of a basketball fan, but am very interested in the cultural aspects of many sports in the culture of a country. Jacques Barzun wrote truly, I think, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball... That baseball fitly expresses the powers of the nation's mind and body is a merit separate from the glory of being the most active, agile, varied, articulate, and brainy of all group games. It is of and for our century. Tennis belongs to the individualistic past--a hero, or at most a pair of friends or lovers, against the world. The idea of baseball is a team, an outfit, a section, a gang, a union, a cell, a commando squad--in short, a twentieth century setup of opposite numbers." god's country and mine [The book was published during my senior year of high school, and my book report got an A+ -- an early success as a book reviewer. :)] Basketball, apparently invented here, has a long history -- my father hated the "modern" game -- he always complained about the "run and shoot" rather than the ball control game he played. In 1995, the Minnesota Timberwolves shook up the culture of the NBA by selecting Kevin Garnett with the fifth pick of the draft. Garnett was drafted straight out of high school, not the first, but one of a significant number of players of his generation. This fine book describes the lives, good and bad, of many of those players, as well as many other aspects of the impact on basketball, on sports in general, and in the culture of America.

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