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Swimming With The Sharps: A Football Season Spent In Las Vegas



Synopsis

Every weekend throughout the fall, McCarran airport expels thousands of people on to the Las Vegas Strip. Many of these visitors come to Las Vegas to bet on football, hoping to profit from the obsession that overtakes their weekends from September to February. Many will return to McCarran a few days later, a little poorer but a little wiser. However another group, reveling in winnings, boards that departing plane with a belief they know more than those large casinos that dot the Strip; convinced they could leave behind their day to day life back in the town where they live, move to Las Vegas and make a living gambling on the sports they love. So, what would happen if someone actually did that? *Swimming with the Sharps* is a first-person account of an amateur trying to make a living via football gambling. *Swimming with the Sharps* follows David McIntire as he spends the 2012 football season in Las Vegas, chronicling what he learns and whether he wins or loses gambling on games every week. The book has two components. In part, it looks at the various components that make up sports gambling - such as developing a handicapping system, identifying when to bet or determining the size of a bet - and how professionals approach it compared to how McIntire handles it. McIntire talks with professional bettors, gambling journalists and bookmakers to understand what they have learned in their years in town while providing full transparency into his unique approach that straddles the worlds of amateur and professional bettors. Interspersed with this look at gambling fundamentals are the experiences of a football fan gambling each week in America's playground: days in sportsbooks surrounded by every character imaginable; insight into the lives of bookmakers who run these vast money-making operations; the joys of winning money; the pain of lost money and lost games for his favorite teams.

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Customer Reviews

David McIntire lives in Denver and writes frequently on sports and gambling. His writing has appeared on ESPN.com, Deadspin, Vice Sports, SBNation Longform, The Cauldron, Betting Talk and The Classical. He can be followed on Twitter @PFBSuperDave.

Full disclosure: I both know the author well and was with him for part of his Vegas sojourn. Dave got to do something most of us only dream of. It takes courage to chase a dream. Dave took a big risk with this adventure. I am not talking about the money he laid as bets....I am talking about putting his very football fandom in peril. One lesson I learned very clearly from the book is that in order to swim with the "sharps" you need to leave your heart and your hunches at the door. There is no place for fondness of your alma mater or your hometown team. Your gut telling you to bet on the Saints on the road is more likely a bad batch of chicken nachos from Raffles than a sound bit of intuition.

While it is true that no one has yet come up with a perfect "system", it is also clear that without a sound, mathematically based system using available stats and metrics, you likely won't be quitting your day job. I found the book to be very enlightening on how Joe Q. Public can go to Vegas and at least stand a chance, rather than just throwing \$20 on the Broncos, or whomever else the media is obsessing about. I thought it struck the right balance between anecdotes and interviews and the breakdowns/recaps of the bets being made. I found it refreshing that Dave wasn't seeking to become a 'tout' or sell you on how he cracked the code. He was just relaying one man's reflections on a season spent chasing a dream. Did Dave forever change his ability to watch a football game and only care about who wins or loses? Probably so. But perhaps no more than all of us who have devoted too much time to Fantasy Football over the past decade. And I didn't even get to stay at the MGM for 6 months.

I really like this book. The reason why I gave 4 instead of 5 was mainly because he is not that great of a writer. He is not bad, but he is also not that good. The book flow was above average for a newbie writer. I am thankful that Dave wrote this book though. How many people walk away for almost a year to pursue a dream? I know this is one of my dreams that I would love to try out. He had the stones to take a chance and for that I really respect him. He does go over betting in simple terms, so if you are not a guru he will get you up to speed on the lingo and how it works. There are multiple bets you can place. Instead of just picking the 49ers to win, you can bet the score, or even

bet silly things like which team will score first. I understand there is not enough demand, but a kindle edition would have been better, because currently there is only the paperback option.

Interesting ideal for a book, but David's handicapping knowledge is very, very poor. He's truly a beginner. For me or anyone with a high handicapping IQ, it falls short. I also thought I would take a break from self improvement, inspirational, and business books and escape with this fun book, understanding that it would offer little value. So it was brutal to have to read his frequent political remarks...so inappropriate for a book like this. Everything about this book was horrible. Since there is no zero star option - I'll give it a generous 1.

If you want any insight into the world of sports betting DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK. If you want a game by game replay of one person's 6 month stay in Vegas, go ahead and waste your time reading horrible anecdotes of an amateur gambler. I'm not sure how this book garnered such a good rating but I was totally fooled. Pick up Chad Millman's book The Odds instead. Please. Thank me later.

Provided a couple insights into the betting world based on his interviews with those actually in the betting world. But, the the guy was betting 50 to 250 per game with a bankroll of 10k....I wouldn't call that swimming with the sharps.

I love the concept of this book where the author attempts to make it in Vegas as a professional better. The problem is the book gives practically no insight on betting strategy and is very long winded in games that happened years ago. This had the potential to be a really great book, but it fell short.

Excellent look inside a betting football season. I'm very familiar with several of the Casinos that were part of his journey and he's right on with the type of people they cater too.

A good, fast read. If you like gambling, you'll like this book.

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