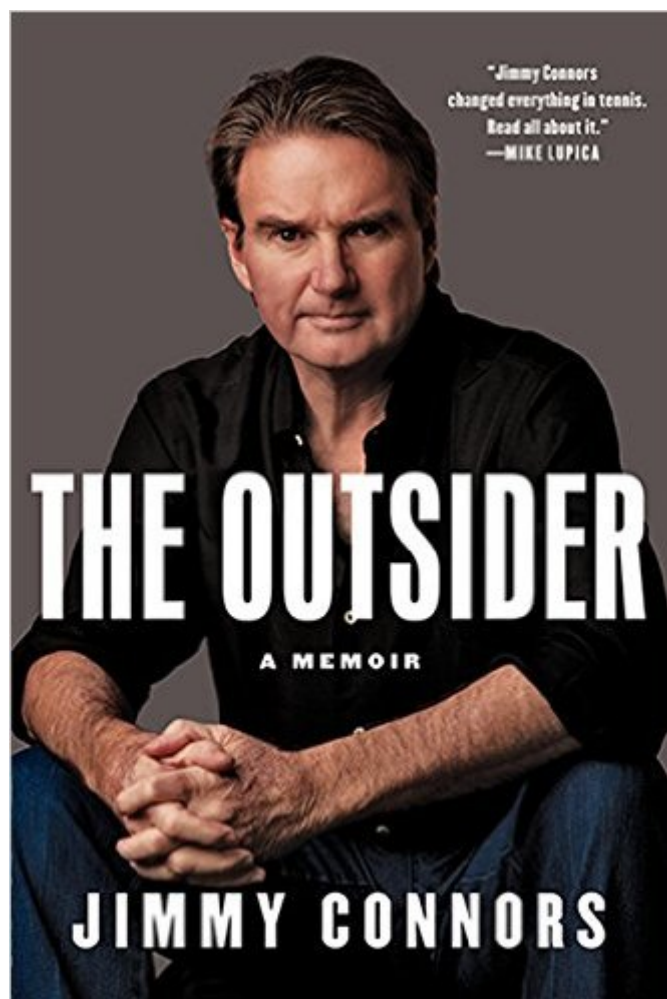


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The Outsider: A Memoir



Synopsis

The Outsider is a no-holds-barred memoir by the original bad boy of tennis, Jimmy Connors. Connors ignited the tennis boom in the 1970s with his aggressive style of play, turning his matches with John McEnroe, Bjorn Borg, and Ivan Lendl into prizefights. But it was his prolonged dedication to his craft that won him the public's adoration. He capped off one of the most remarkable runs in tennis history at the age of 39 when he reached the semifinals of the 1991 U.S. Open, competing against players half his age. More than just the story of a tennis champion, The Outsider is the uncensored account of Connors's life, from his complicated relationship with his formidable mother and his storybook romance with tennis legend Chris Evert, to his battles with gambling and fidelity that threatened to derail his career and his long-lasting marriage to Playboy playmate Patti McGuire. When he retired from tennis twenty years ago, Connors all but disappeared from public view. In The Outsider, he is back at the top of his game, and as feisty, outspoken, and defiant as ever. This autobiography includes original color photographs from the author.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is more than you might expect. It's not a "how great I was" autobiography nor a "tell-all" book filled with shocking stories of the sordid events in a famous tennis star's life; it is perhaps a bit of both of those to some degree but generally it's a real story of a real outsider who conquered the tennis world. Not that Connors is always straight-forward and endearing as he tells his story: he has many axes to grind (with fellow tennis stars and others) and tends to put himself in the most

favorable light of most contentious events he was a part of, but, in general, he seems quite honest about his life and mistakes and is not unduly proud of his accomplishments. He's a likeable guy. Jimmy Connors did come from humble roots in East St. Louis, Illinois, coached by his mother to be good enough at 16 for him to venture out to California at that age - alone - to receive professional coaching. The fact that his mother remained an important force in his tennis career caused many in pro tennis circles (including tennis media people) to deem Connors as a 'momma's boy' and to be highly critical of his mother. We get at the heart of Connors as he writes of the importance of his mother in his life and his anger at how she was treated: "Why was it OK for Joe Montana's dad to teach his son football or Wayne Gretzky's dad to teach him hockey but it wasn't OK for Gloria Connors to teach her son tennis?" Indeed.

This memoir blindsided me, far more open and revealing a book than I expected from Jimmy Connors, someone who by his own admission tends to be wary of people and not given to personal revelations. Yet somehow he manages to be surprisingly open in *The Outsider*, all without softening his edgy personality or blunt take on life. It was fascinating to read of the journey Connors took to move "tennis from those gated country clubs to the streets." This struggle was part of what made him an outsider (his temperament was another part of that), unwilling to accept the status quo. He wanted to reach out to the average person and change the image of tennis. He was willing to buck the system even if he offended the "old-school fans" who perceived him as "a crude upstart trampling their precious traditions." *The Outsider* deftly straddles a fine line, balancing personal information (a romance with Chris Evert, tensions with John McEnroe, a crisis in his marriage) with details about tennis history, technique, and pivotal championships. Although he wasn't above seeking revenge, there were sections in the book when Connors gave credit to players who disliked him. He even calls Arthur Ashe's win over him at Wimbledon in 1975 "flawless". Although Connors went into that game injured, with hairline fractures in a shin, he doesn't use that as an excuse for his loss. Even in the first few chapters, it becomes clear that Connors overcame plenty to become a tennis champion. But he also had some incredible role models. One of those was his mother. When he was only 8 years old he saw her get punched in the mouth by a couple of thugs at a public tennis court. Even though she was injured so badly she lost her teeth, she still got up and practiced tennis with her two sons the next morning.

This book will speak to you, I believe most especially to those who vividly recall the fraternity of Connors, Nastase, Lendl, Borg and Johnny Mac amongst others in the 70s and 80s, the era of the

bad boys with talent and big personalities to back the glib verbosity that made them captivating stars. This is not a tell all. This is not artfully written. At times he cuts the telling of a tale to a paragraph whilst waxing about the origins of his footwork, topspin, backhand to the tenth degree; in here lies the beauty of THE OUTSIDER -- this is Jimmy Connors spinning the narrative central to his being, it's all about tennis and it's always, always been about tennis. His love for the game and his determination to be the best radiates with honesty in pure Connors directness. There are some classic stories, pure gems about friendships, foolishness, romance, and recklessness and lessons learned. Tales from his life which he has the right to portion out as he sees fit (which he does and right now I'm referring to Chris Evert--his one time sweetheart, but certainly no sweetheart) and again, doled out with truth and just enough information held back to maintain respect. Evert, is old news the other relationships are far more wooly, fun and eye-opening. His wife Patti is his backbone, his children are a revelation to him, the complex relationship with his mother Gloria is explained and defined. what a woman! But in the end this autobiography is Jimmy Connors telling the world how much he loved the game, explaining his issues but being true to himself. I miss the bad boy(s) of tennis. Connors was talented, worked hard, showed his emotions, played to the crowd.

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