



After Friday Night Lights: When the Games Ended, Real Life Began. An Unlikely Love Story.

H.G. Bissinger

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Nearly twenty-five years ago, H. G. (Buzz) Bissinger, then a young reporter for the “Philadelphia Inquirer,” moved to Odessa, Texas, family in tow, to follow the fortunes of the 1988 Permian High School football team. He hoped to write a celebratory treatment of a team and a town. The result: “Friday Night Lights,” a bestselling American classic that spawned the popular film as well as the series, considered by many one of the best on television.

The original book’s most compelling character was James “Boobie” Miles, and his experience in Odessa was, as Bissinger puts it in his daringly honest sequel “After Friday Night Lights,” “a symbol of everything that was wrong with high school football.” The complex friendship between subject and author has deepened over the years, and is, Bissinger writes, “the most lasting legacy of “Friday Night Lights,” or at least the legacy I care about most.”

Heading into the 1988 season, Miles looked like a star-in-the-making, a sure bet to ascend to college and the NFL. Abandoned by his mother, beaten by his dad, he had scraped through a rough upbringing, but it appeared that success on the field was soon to redeem his pain. Then, in a meaningless preseason scrimmage, Boobie blew out his knee. By midseason he was off the team, no longer needed by his coaches, who had found themselves a new running back.

“After Friday Night Lights” follows Boobie through the dark years he suffered after his injury right up to a present that is imbued with a new kind of hope. It is the indelible portrait of the oddest of enduring friendships: that of a writer and his subject, a “neurotic Jew” and a West Texas oil-field worker, a white man raised in privilege and a black man brought up in poverty and violence, and a father and his “fourth son.” Their story encompasses the realities of race and class in America. And reveals with heartbreaking accuracy how men rise again after their dreams are broken.

After Friday Night Lights: When the Games Ended, Real Life Began. An Unlikely Love Story. Details

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An Unlikely Love Story. H.G. Bissinger**

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Alice Bola says

Years ago, I feel head over heels in love with a little television show called Friday Night Lights. I didn't see the movie, I didn't know it was based on a book by the same name. I had no idea who H.G. "Buzz" Bissinger was. Texas was the state where the classic television show Dallas took place. Texas was where my cousin Carla lived with her family in a nice Houston suburb. Texas was where the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders (in there fabulous hot pants and white boots) performed. I didn't know a West Texas existed. I didn't know football there was such a big deal (and that's putting it mildly). Man, I had a lot to learn.

Because of my love for TV show, I picked up the book. What I discovered was a town in West Texas called Odessa where racism still ran rabid and football was god. (I still haven't watched the movie. Truth be told, Billy Bob Thorton creeps me out.) Odessa is town similar to Dillon but more raw, more cunning and dangerous. After I finished reading the book, I realized that I would have done a disservice not only to Mr. Bissinger but to James "Boobie" Miles as well.

I wasn't quite sure what I was going to get with this short. I didn't read the preview, I saw two things that made it a must read for me – the title and the author. I am delighted that Buzz decided to revisit Boobie's story. I loved how brutally honest Buzz was about their relationship. I am pleased he was able to admit his flaws in the first book, admit that his portrayal of certain people made them into heroes when they were anything but. Above all, I am happy that he has maintained his relationship with Boobie. He never gave up on him, helped him when he could and to steal a line from the book, all he got back was Boobie's friendship. And that was enough for him.

If you are a fan of the show, movie, or book, After Friday Night Lights is an incredible read that will touch your heart, inspire change in thoughts and feelings. You will root for the underdog and those who defend them. Like Buzz, I am rooting for Boobie too. I hope that this is his turn around. Hopefully it's his time to shine in a way that has nothing to do with football and everything to do with the strong, giving man he is.

Tung says

This is more a documentary essay than a full-length book, and in it, Bissinger discusses the effects of his book *Friday Night Lights* on himself and one of the protagonists of the book (Boobie Miles) twenty years later. Boobie and Buzz stayed in touch in the years since the book's release. Their fates have gone in two starkly different directions: Bissinger received fame, fortune, and notoriety for the book, especially after it inspired a TV series; Boobie, on the other hand, never recovered from the torn ACL recounted in the book, and has jumped from job to job, living a life of poverty and hardship. The two speak on the phone frequently, and visit each other whenever possible, maintaining a bond built through the book's success. Bissinger shares how he has helped Boobie financially over the past two decades, and essentially uses the book to share his guilt at how Boobie ended up. Bissinger confesses that the two decades since the book have given him a new perspective on the racism of the Permian situation from the 1980's, and how he did not make a bigger deal of it in the book (especially in his treatment of head coach Gary Gaines). I left with conflicted feelings about Bissinger. On one hand, he is very candid about his shortcomings and how guilty he feels

about Boobie's life. On the other hand, I almost feel like he uses this book to atone for his shortcomings and justify his actions. Overall, it's a solid read, especially for fans of the original book, but it's fairly quick and shallow. Recommended.

Debbie says

Follow-up on the main character featured in the original book / movie "Friday Night Lights." I missed both of these prior to reading this book. I'm not a football fan, and I live in Missouri, so the fact that this story relates to Texas High School football would normally not draw my interest. I was a captive audience on a long car journey and found this to be a quick, interesting read. I'm not a fan of gratuitous foul language in books. There wasn't too much, but a certain 4-letter word was peppered throughout, along with the use of derogatory ethnic slang in a few places. I'm not sure this story could have been accurately told otherwise. The predominate theme is about what happens to people when life doesn't turn out the way they hoped and they are still haunted by the "what if?" possibilities.

blackness says

This seemed like a repentance story for kinda screwing the kids on the team b/c the author, hollywood, and many others have profited majorly for their stories, while they are still out in W.Texas broke having seen nothing for their troubles.

It is like the "moral" from FNL has just continued. High school kids thrown into an adults money making machine and when they are finished, thrown away.

I was mildly interested in the continuation of the main character and would have liked it a lot more if the major focus of the story wasn't how much money the author has given Boobie over the years.

I hope to see a continuation of this continuation about how all the proceeds have been beneficently given to Boobie.

Shirley says

I loved the original FNL book (and the TV series even more, as evidenced by the fact that the tipping factor in my naming my baby son Dylan was that it was a phonetic homage to the fictional town of Dillon, Texas; also, I've been known to randomly say, "Texas forever!" even though I've spent a total of 24 hours in Texas), so I was pretty excited to get this via a free download card from Starbucks. This quick read, 22 years after the original FNL book was written, focuses on Boobie Miles, who had the career-ending ACL injury in the original book. I was surprised to see that the author continued to play a big part of Boobie's life. Indeed, Bissinger refers to Boobie as his fourth son. Bissinger nicely balances ruminations about Boobie's frankly messed-up life, Bissinger's attempts to help him, and Bissinger wondering whether he helped Boobie too much or too little - and guilt that he benefited so much from the FNL franchise when Boobie got only \$1000 for signing away his rights to the FNL film (and a bit of additional money to play an extra). More than anything it was an interesting look at the story behind the story. I'd recommend this for any fan of the original FNL book.

Damon says

This is mostly a very brief, and very personal, update on the relationship that Bissinger has developed with Boobie Miles. It's also a bit of a forum for Bissinger to take some shots back at Odessa and the people who were pissed at him for writing Friday Night Lights.

I can't imagine what he expected - he basically moved to a town where the people seemed to have accepted him pretty openly, and then outed them to the entire world in a variety of media as football-obsessed racist hicks who would sacrifice their children's futures to see the local high school win another championship. You can't expect to stay on too many Christmas card lists after that...

I can understand wanting to defend yourself a bit, but you reap what you sow, I guess.

Bob Mustin says

On a hot afternoon visit to Starbuck's for a Frappuccino, I picked up one of their Apple gimmes, this time for a free e-book - Bissinger's.

First: this sort of freebie is a good marketing tool; I picked it up because it's a book and was free. After reading it, I'll no doubt read Friday Night Lights, Bissinger's most famous work, the source of a movie and a TV series. For those in the dark regarding Texas high school football and/or completely indifferent, FNL was something of an expose on the inordinate emphasis football has in the lives of Texans. Consequently it made Bissinger, a Pulitzer-winning journalist, persona non grata to many Texans.

A central part of the story of FNL was a supremely talented black player, Boobie Miles. At one point during Miles' high school career, he blew out a knee, was discouraged from surgery, and replaced on the team with another, white, player. Consequently, Boobie's gridiron dreams fell to ashes. The aftermath of this personal bring-down is Bissinger's story in After Friday Night Lights.

Written some quarter century after the original, Bissinger resumes an acquaintance with Miles, his post-football life a matrix of problems. Bissinger bails out Boobie where possible, but the ex-football phenom makes life difficult for all around him, including Bissinger.

Bissinger's writing here is tough, unsparing, yet sympathetic. You get a strong sense of his empathy for Boobie, yet his frustration with him. The e-book is short - hardly more than an overlong short story - but it's as compelling a piece of journalism as you're likely to read.

I'd check it out - even if you have to pay for it - the writing and the story are both worth it.

Brian Kennedy says

An interesting, well-written follow up on the relationship between the author and Boobie Miles (one of the main characters in the first book.) Bissinger looks at how the publication of his book (and the movie that followed) affected Boobie, and wrestles with how active of a role he should play in trying to help Boobie get his life on track. However, he ends his story in the middle. We don't know if Boobie is ever going to prosper

or not, we only know what the author's hopes are for him. If the answer is "we'll never know," Bissinger could have explored that more in his conclusion, which as is, seems abrupt.

Alex says

Buzz Bissinger goes back to Texas to visit Boobie Miles, the breakaway "character" from *Friday Night Lights*, and to reflect on their friendship.

Some of this is Bissinger addressing the approach he took to *Friday Night Lights* saying that he would have represented some key figures differently, and outed one of the racist commenters instead of referring to him as "one of the white coaches" (Bissinger goes on to say that the coach went on to marry an Africa-American woman, which is "hardly the act of a racist"). Key aspects of the original book are thrown into a very different relief.

But ultimately this is a book about Boobie Miles, the years that followed his football career ending injury, and the impact *Friday Night Lights* had on his life. Bissinger is cautiously optimistic, and while he's still occasionally clumsy (endless reference to "rap phrases"), he's definitely got clear eyes and a full heart. The ballad of Boobie and Buzz isn't exactly a love story for the ages, but these guys are sweet - and a damning indictment of American society lurks just barely below the surface.

Meg Tripp says

As a huge fan of the book and the TV series, this little follow-up added a bit more color to the story for me. It was interesting to learn about the ongoing relationship between the author and the tragic hero, and how FNL changed (and didn't change) life for both of them.

However, the mea culpa tone, juxtaposed against criticisms of the coaches and Hollywood and West Texas itself, feels a little less genuine when Bissinger details the loans and support he's provided to Miles. The portrayal of their relationship seemed a little too savior / saved at that point, especially given that Miles' story was behind much of the money he had to give away.

A fair read for an hour!

Max Florence says

Decent book but just the overall idea of the FNL empire is great. The movie and TV show really helped it out but still a good book.

Dachokie says

These Lights Could Use Higher Watt Bulbs ...

Buzz Bissinger's seminal "Friday Night Lights" is one of the better sports books I've ever read. The immersive nature of the book made it too difficult to simply read-and-forget ... it had me begging for a follow-up. AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS may have filled a void to some degree, but it left me feeling somewhat shortchanged.

After reading this brief (albeit informative) follow-up, I quickly realized the purpose of the book was less about satisfying fans of the FNL book and more about the author's ongoing struggle with the success of his best-seller at the unfortunate expense of its star, Boobie Miles.

AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS focuses on Miles' miserable plight following an injury that ended his starry-eyed dream of playing professional football. It is easy to sense the gnawing guilt Bissinger has experienced since writing his successful book (which spawned a decent movie and an arguably better television series). Glaringly contrasting Bissinger's success over the years is the chaotic and somewhat wretched life of Miles; a life that includes fathering numerous children with different women, unstable employment, legal issues and mounting debt. While AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS details Miles' woes it also illustrates the almost fatherly bond Bissinger has formed with him over the last 20+ years. The sincerity of the relationship (from both sides) is difficult at times (considering Miles' primary contact with Bissinger usually centers on a need for money), but it is definitely sincere and deeper than one would expect. The guilt Bissinger expresses doesn't always pertain to material things as we learn one particular passage in FNL proved to be as emotionally devastating to Miles as his physical injury. Ironically, as depressing as the story may sound, it's somewhat uplifting as we see Boobie as being more resilient and happy, despite his life of suffering.

While AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS allows readers to catch up on the divergent lives of the author and his prime subject, those hoping for a more thorough then-and-now perspective on the coaches, players, parents, Permian High School and Odessa itself will be disappointed. Bissinger knows how to tell a captivating story and he actually does so with AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS ... I simply wanted more.

Emilio says

Friday Night Lights by Buzz Bissinger is a thriller story about high school football in Texas. Every Friday night, the Texas townspeople gather to watch high school football, which is a huge deal to their lives. Not only about football, but the book also talks about politics, racism, and the economic issues in Texas during the 1980's. The book was made popular by the television series Friday Night Lights, which was based on the book, and both are based on a true story. This page-turning book is perfect for those who enjoy football and a good story about teamwork and relationships. I highly recommend it.

Eric says

Buzz is another person I find fascinating (see a theme with my last three reads?). He wrote this transcendent sports book (the original Friday Night Lights), his work for Vanity Fair is downright incredible, and yet in interviews and on Twitter, etc, he seems to be so angry and almost crazy that you wonder if he's gone mad from trying to live up to the standards he's set for himself. Well, he says as much in this, all while giving a gripping and emotional look at his relationship with FNL key subject and extraordinarily tragic figure

Boobie Miles. Clearly everything that happened has dramatically affected both, and this novella/pull out feature-type piece starkly illustrates that. Getting the insight into him as a writer and person makes me interested in the book he just wrote on his struggles with his autistic son, which probably explains even more about who he is. I think this guy may be really a brilliant, troubled artist.

Marisa says

very quick read. I loved all aspects of Friday Night Lights..I loved the original book, the movie and above all else I loved the tv show. this book was a good follow up. It was sad to hear about the troubles Booby went through and now i will watch the movie with a new eye. I think I learned above all else that Coach Gaines is much less like the Billy Bob Thornton character and Coach Taylor and much more like Voight's portrayal in varsity blues. It was nice to see Odessa again and know that football still reigns supreme. recommend this short, quick read to any FNL fan
