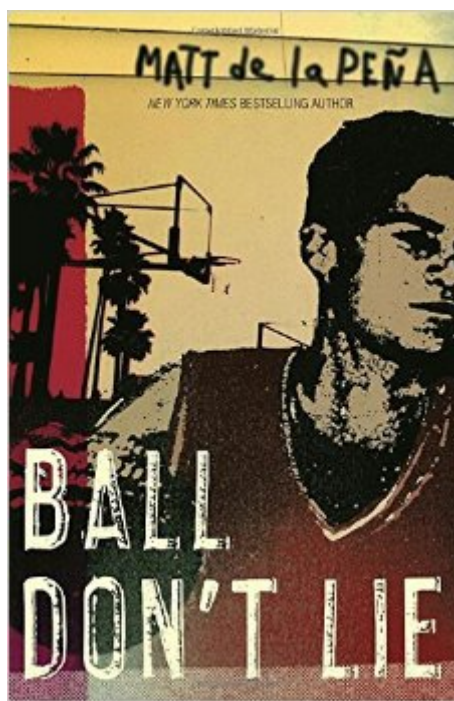


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# Ball Don't Lie



## Synopsis

Newbery Award-winning author Matt de la Peña's *Ball Don't Lie* about basketball "is a must-read." [The Bulletin] "Sticky is a beat-around-the-head foster kid with nowhere to call home but the street, and an outer shell so tough that no one will take him in. He started out life so far behind the pack that the finish line seems nearly unreachable. He's a white boy living and playing in a world where he doesn't seem to belong. But Sticky can ball. And basketball might just be his ticket out . . . if he can only realize that he doesn't have to be the person everyone else expects him to be." Matt de la Peña's breakout urban masterpiece, *Ball Don't Lie* takes place where the street and the court meet and where a boy can be anything if he puts his mind to it. [STAR] "[An] inspiring story. Sticky is a true original, and de la Peña has skillfully brought him to life." -School Library Journal, Starred "Riveting...Teens will be strongly affected by the unforgettable, distinctly male voice; the thrilling, unusually detailed basketball action; and the questions about race, love, self-worth, and what it means to build a life without advantages." -Booklist "Stunningly realistic, this book will hook older readers, especially urban teen males." -VOYA "The characters live and breath...This is a must-read." -The Bulletin "De la Peña does an excellent job of combining the streets with the sport. Gritty and mesmerizing." -Kirkus Reviews "I have never before seen blacktop ball depicted so well. In this novel, you will find its flash, its power, and its elegance without chains. This is powerful stuff." -Antawn Jamison, forward for the Los Angeles Clippers "From the very first sentence, this book grabbed me and didn't let go. The deeper I got into it, the more I felt like Sticky's story was my story. His heart, his handle, the guys in the gym, his potential pitfalls, his dreams. All of it. In a weird sense, this is my life." -Grayson Boucher ("The Professor") of the AND 1 Mix Tape Tour "Truly authentic in its examination of both the game I love and the invariable missteps toward manhood. You cannot fail to be moved by the eloquence and truth of this story." -Rick Fox, former forward for the Los Angeles Lakers An ALA Best Book for Young Adults An ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I could tell you a lot about this game...."How a dark gym like Lincoln Rec is a different world. Full of theft and dunk, smooth jumpers and fragile egos. Full of its own funky politics and stratification. Music bleeding out of old rattling speakers from open to close. Old rhythm and blues. Stevie Wonder. Aretha Franklin. Funk. Motown. Marvin Gaye. Sometimes Jimmy gets talked into hard-core rap on weekends. Or Trey sneaks in his three-year-old demo tape."Always music."There are fat rats that scurry through the lane on game point. Beady eyes on the man with the ball. There are roaches congregating under the bleachers."There is so much dust on the slick floor that sometimes guys will go to stop and slide right out of the gym. Every time there's a break in the action, ten guys put palm to sole for grip."There are a hundred different ways of talking and a thousand uses of the word motherf\_\_\_\_r."There are no women."In the winter there are so many homeless bodies spread out across court two you can hardly see the floor. There are leaks when it rains. Rusted pots are set out to collect heavy drops. Sometimes a guy will track in mud and everybody throws a fit. Jimmy sets out a twenty-five-dollar heater and everybody puts their hands up to it before they play."Court one at Lincoln Rec is the epicenter of Sticky's life in L.A. and of his dreams for the future. Lincoln Rec is a constant for him, a positive one, unlike that series of light-colored minivans that have repeatedly arrived at the group home over the years carrying foster parents who pick him up, make him big promises about a real home...promises that for various reasons always go up in smoke and leave him, once again, chillin' back at the group home.Court one is where he, a seventeen-year-old white boy, builds his skills playing an extremely physical style of pickup basketball with an assortment of tough, older black guys. On court one, where either you are seriously in the zone or you're spending all day with your butt in the bleachers, Sticky is determined to play and win.As Dante, a former pro player and a regular at Lincoln Rec explains to him, Sticky has started the "life being a race" thing "three stones back." Not only has Sticky had to deal with the failings of his drug-addicted, prostitute mother and, later, with those repeated rejections by foster parents, but he also has "that mental thing, where you gotta do stupid stuff over and over and over." The depictions of Sticky's frequent

ritualistic behaviors, revealing his struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, are agonizing. But, ironically, it is that same compulsion that keeps him so focused on constantly perfecting his skills, whether they be related to basketball or to other, less noble, pursuits. "Won't you help me girl Just as soon as you can?"--Al Green There's the bright high school girl with the beautiful green eyes, Anh-thu, who works in Miller's Outpost. Sticky meets her one day when he drops in there to steal some new pants. "Annie" seems able to see through the hard shell to the real Sticky. The story bounces back and forth from Lincoln Rec to scenes of Sticky's early days with his mother, the different experiences with foster families, playing J.V. hoops at school, hanging out partying with the guys, and being with Anh-thu. All together, there must be a hundred different characters we meet, and each one is unique and memorable. A number of those characters are homeless, some sleeping on cardboard on court two, others in a public toilet somewhere. Sticky's world is on the underbelly side of L.A. And regularly we get glimpses of the "other world" in the form of faceless businessmen who come walking in on their lunch break to watch what's going on and then return to their offices to tell their co-workers about the games, the fights, and, undoubtedly, about the skinny white kid with the moves. "Rob's weight is on the back of his heels on defense. Waiting." The face rattles off truth in situations like this. Fear flickering in Rob's wide eyes: Get too close and Sticky sticks a jumper in his eye. Too many possibilities when the man with the ball gets to say which way and when, how fast and for how long. And you can multiply all that by ten if the guy can play. Get busted on in front of everybody. Get dragged all game by the skinny white kid everybody talks about. "All the loudmouths on the sideline are at full attention." Sticky jab-steps right and pulls back, keeps his dribble. "Rob retreats." Sticky is: through the legs, around the back, playing hoops with a yo-yo. Walk the dawg when everybody calls for a trick. Hold the ball too long. "He is: stolen Nike shoes, stolen mesh shorts, ankle socks. Back and forth handling the ball, knees bent, his eyes in Rob's eyes. Piss off the old purists who cry for a return to fundamentals. The ones who've lost so much vision they're blind to the dance of it all. The spin move like a skirt lifting pirouette on calloused toes. The dip. Jump shot splashing through the net like a perfect dismount." A damaged white teenager, a bunch of tough black "ballers," a dark rec center in L.A., and the girl with the eyes come together to make this gritty, urban story a powerful, rhythmic read. The thrumming beats and the sweat dripping out from between the pages also place author Matt de la Pena squarely in contention for Rookie of the Year honors. You'll see this on my Best of 2005 list later this year.

...and listen, don't get me wrong, this is a book about ball. Crack open the binding and you'll find the best basketball writing I've ever read. You'll see Sticky dribbling left, sliding right, spinning to the

hoop for a sweet layup. You'll see him looking like a pinball, bouncing off one defender after another on his way in for the score. You'll see him pull up on the break and drop nothing but net. You'll see him shatter egos and leave guys busted all over the dark courts of Los Angeles. But there's more to it than that. There's more to it than basketball, just like there's more to the game than scoring. This book is also about love. The love a boy feels for a girl. For his friends. The love that starts from nothing, that creeps up slow on you until one day you realize you love this place, this thing, these people. This place you never stopped to think about. These people you hardly know. It's about falling in love and being in love and doing anything in the world for the sake of love. It's about the love between a mother and her son. Between a son and his mother. And of course, it's about the love of the game.

This book is really beautifully written. It's poetic and flashy and ultra hip. But the story is what makes it a great novel. Sticky's reality will break your heart. His passion, his inability to relate to others. But in the end it's all about redemption. You will be touched by this novel.

This novel has as much heart as anything I've ever read. The main character, Sticky, isn't trying to be anybody, he's just trying to survive. The narrator doesn't judge him one way or another, he just presents him to the reader. And you feel for Sticky because he's so real. He has so much heart--even though he doesn't want anybody to see it. I fell in love with this incredible work of fiction. You will, too.

What a phenomenal book! I hope there is a sequel because I fell in love with Sticky. Mr. de la Pena is a gifted writer.

Sticky is one of the most original literary characters I've come across in a long time. He rarely speaks. He doesn't relate well to others. He's alone even when he's surrounded by people. He's OCD. But underneath all that he's an incredibly talented and vulnerable kid. Throughout the book I wanted to reach into the story and take care of him, make sure he was okay. De la Pena has created an unbelievably real adolescent boy. Beautiful book.

..it doesn't take much to fall IN LOVE with this book (or the author for that matter.) Aside from the eloquent writing; the kind that makes you feel like you are inside a movie..the author captures every part of every character. Paints beautiful pictures. Sets up all the scenes perfectly. You know Sticky

because you feel him. You become part of his world; part of his pain and witness his raw, unedited, without limits and boundaries kind of passion for finding and understanding love, and for basketball. After I picked up the book, I couldn't put it down. Highly recommend!!!

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