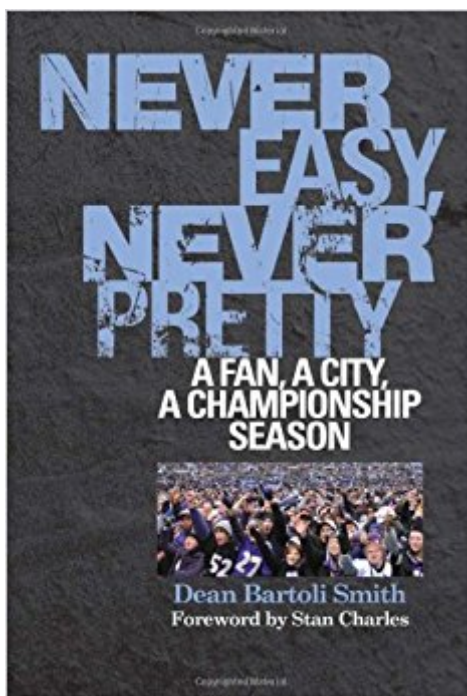


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Never Easy, Never Pretty: A Fan, A City, A Championship Season



Synopsis

When the Ravens won Super Bowl XLVII in New Orleans, it was a joyous moment for fans and team alike. For Dean Bartoli Smith, a lifelong Baltimore football fan and writer for *The Baltimore Brew* and *Press Box*, it was especially sweet. In *Never Easy, Never Pretty*, he recalls the ups and downs and ultimate thrills of a special season while also showing how a football team impacts its fans and its city. Smith recounts the season from start to glorious finish while interweaving Baltimore's professional football history, telling his own story of growing up with the Colts, then gradually transferring adult loyalties to the new team in town, the Ravens. Family, friends, and other fans share their recollections, too, letting us see how a football team becomes part of a community. Smith's game-by-game recounting of an improbable season brings back all the excitement and uncertainty as the team starts strong, wobbles, then finds its inspiration and character in the playoffs. For each game *Never Easy, Never Pretty* features a diverse array of quotes, interviews, and commentary from players, broadcasters, and executives, including Joe Flacco, Ray Lewis, Art Donovan, Kevin Byrne, Steve Bisciotti, and Ozzie Newsome. *Never Easy, Never Pretty* highlights the Ravens' electrifying season and celebrates a team, a city, and its emotional landscape during an unlikely run to a Super Bowl victory. The result is an insightful and poignant book about much more than a championship season. *Never Easy, Never Pretty* includes:

- The 4th & 29 play by Ray Rice against the Chargers
- The game-saving first down
- The 70-yard bomb from Joe Flacco to Jacoby Jones known as the "Mile High Miracle"
- Interviews with Rob Burnett, Keith Mills, Lenny Moore, Sean Landeta, Terrell Suggs, Tom Matte, and many others
- Photographs by long-time Ravens photographer Phil Hoffmann

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Customer Reviews

"I loved this book. I couldn't put it down. Beautifully written, it's a must-read for Ravens fans! We all know the outcome and I still couldn't wait to read the next chapter. You'll have to read it to prove that it really happened! The most important plays are thoroughly detailed, giving that scary, anxious rush that we had most Sundays."--Vince Bagli, retired Baltimore Colts announcer and sportscaster

"Dean Bartoli Smith's *Never Easy, Never Pretty* will help satisfy the hunger of so many Baltimore Ravens fans wishing to re-live the club's remarkable 2012 title year. It's a virtual play-by-play re-enactment. But, more than that, it's about the long love affair that's consumed so many in Baltimore, which commenced with a team called the Colts and continues, strong as ever, with the beloved Ravens."--Michael Olesker, author of *The Colts' Baltimore: A City and Its Love Affair in the Fifties*

"*Never Easy, Never Pretty* reaffirms why loving a sports team like the Ravens is so important. It is an entertaining account of an incredible season written by a fan for the fans. Smith celebrates the resilience of a team, the passion of its fans, and the character of our city."--Keith Mills, Sports Commentator, WBAL

"You will get a kick out of reading *Never Easy, Never Pretty* especially if you were a fan of the Baltimore Colts in the late 1960s and 1970s."--Art Donovan, Baltimore Colts Hall of Fame Defensive Tackle

"*Never Easy, Never Pretty* offers a refreshing fan's eye view as if you are sitting at Memorial or M&T Bank Stadiums discussing the heritage of the Colts and the Ravens with fellow fans. The book will leave a legacy for future generations to understand the crossover between the Colts and Ravens showing that Baltimore always was, and still is, a great football town."--John Ziemann, President, The Marching Ravens Band

Dean Bartoli Smith covers the Baltimore Ravens and the Orioles for The Baltimore Brew. His sportswriting has appeared in Press Box, Fan Magazine, Baltimore City Paper, and on the websites Patch.com and the Midnight Mind Review. He is the director of Project MUSE at Johns Hopkins University, and the author of *American Boy*, a volume of poetry.

Whether or not you are a Ravens fan, and even if you despise the Colts for leaving in the middle of the night, if you are from Baltimore, you will love this book! The detail and richness of growing up in Baltimore in the 60's and 70's comes through on every page. The references to places you know,

and the experiences you shared, will earn this book a special place in your heart.

Having grown up in Baltimore when Dean did this book brought back so many fond memories. I could not put the book down. I read it in 1 day. A must read for any Baltimore football fan. GREAT JOB

Just as expected, thank you.

It was fun to re-live the season from the Fan's view. I as a fan I could relate. What a GREAT read.

This is a great gift for Ravens fans, especially those who are from Baltimore. It's not a groundbreaking piece of journalistic excellence but it has heart.

What an absolutely brilliant book. Smith didn't just write a book about a football team, he wrote about an entire city. His clever exploration of the economic, social, cultural and even religious (what football fan doesn't pray) aspects of the team and its winning season is a lesson in unity, pure and simple. Baltimore's history, along with that of the author, plays as large a part in the story as the players and managers do. His description of football plays are so vivid that you can skip the films; you can sense the tension, feel the hits, smell the victory and jump with joy at every successful play. This just happens to be a book about football. It's much more a story of a tightly knit town that knows what it means to come back. Fans of football will love this; fans of Baltimore will adore it.

Full disclosure: Dean Smith is a friend and he excerpts a few lines from a poem of mine in this book. But further disclosure: I could care less about football, though I played it in school for eight years (and I *do* argue, in the carefree era the preceded the travesty of peewee leagues, I was a football player from the moment I held my first Nerf at approximately age 8). That is, I could care less, personally, about sports teams and fandom. So, I read this book because a friend wrote it who I know to be a good writer. And because I was hoping there was more in common in it with my 8-year-old self than my 45-year-old self. I wasn't disappointed. I'll confess that the Introduction is my favorite part of the book and because it is that narrative intelligence and personality of the writer who is the guiding intelligence that accompanies us through the Ravens' season that I found this book so satisfying. This is the sports writer's version of

Smith's excellent poem, "Druid Hill, 1969," from his collection, *American Boy* (<http://tinyurl.com/m2tovam>). Dean Smith's book is about a particular season, and a particular sport and a particular response to it. As the subtitle alerts us--this is a fan's book and so you will read about tackles and interceptions and personalities and antagonisms that are as much the gossip of daily human interaction as the local police blotter or who got caught with whose wife in real life or on *Mad Men*. But what's most interesting is that it really is a book about how things mean to us; that is, it's a book about how we come to be both "I" and "us." It's a book about growing up; it's a book about family; it's a book about community; it's a book about generational changes; it's a book about economic changes; it's a book about a changing city. All of this within the ambit of a personal relationship with a professional sports team. It's a book about how we mean to each other and ourselves and the way that our "common" bonds--such as being a fan of a sport, of a team, of a player, of a school--creates our community and brings us together for life. And if that is never easy it may at least be often pretty.

Dean Bartoli Smith does a fantastic job recapping the 2012-2013 championship season of the Baltimore Ravens. As Smith was going through the games, I was able to replay the highlights in my head that corresponded to the plays he was describing. He vividly recreated the season and it was so easy to fly through the pages of this book. Also, I loved his personal insight. By the end of the book it felt like I had known him and his family for ages. His stories and lesser known facts about some of the big names in Ravens history really pulled the book together for me. I would recommend this book to any Ravens fan. (Personal note: I ended up reading this book in conjunction with *Strength of a Champion* by O.J. Brigance. They compliment each other perfectly.)

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