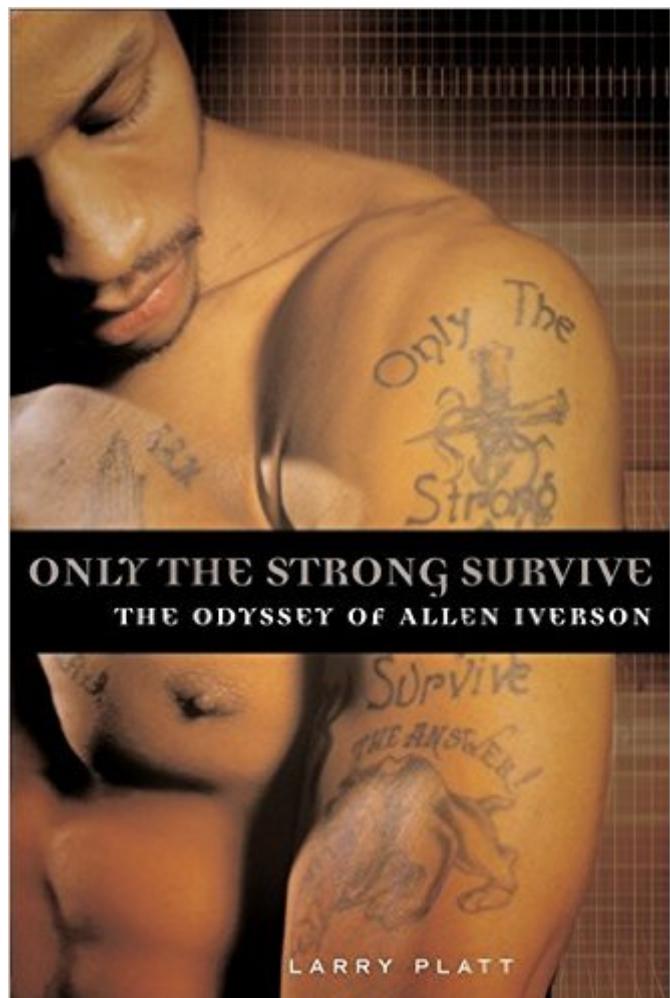


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# Only The Strong Survive: The Odyssey Of Allen Iverson



## Synopsis

There are few figures among America's media-saturated landscape that loom larger than the National Basketball Association's undeniable superstar Allen Iverson. He was the first overall pick of the 1996 NBA draft, and the spotlight has not left him since. Defiantly tattooed, with his hair in cornrows, the six-foot Philadelphia 76ers point guard has been vilified by a sports press still fawning over Michael Jordan's non-threatening, clean-cut visage. From Iverson's rap sheet to his rap album, from his on-court feats to his off-court antics, breathless fans and journalists alike seem determined to track his every move. Part sports star, part antihero, part hip-hop icon, Iverson has managed to cross over into the mainstream of American culture -- without compromise. It wasn't long before Iverson's prodigious athletic skills became apparent. Raised in poverty, with his father in prison, Iverson retreated to his local playgrounds and found escape from the all-too-common woes of the inner-city dweller. In one summer alone, eight of his friends were killed in shootings. But Iverson's talent simply could not be denied, and basketball remained the one constant in his tumultuous existence. And so Iverson, despite all odds, rose. A now-infamous scuffle in a bowling alley led to near race riots in Iverson's hometown of Newport News, Virginia, resulting in his being sentenced to jail time during high school. Eventually, Governor Douglas Wilder granted him clemency, the conviction was overturned on appeal, and his ascent continued. Georgetown coach John Thompson stepped in, giving Iverson a berth on his team at a time when other universities were too skittish to offer the same. It was their loss. After two tremendous years at Georgetown, Iverson declared himself eligible for the NBA draft. And the rest is history. In *Only the Strong Survive*, Larry Platt offers up the first full portrait of a complicated and intensely private star, a man whose loyalty to his family, the streets, and his friends (a group he calls Cru Thik) trumps any other concerns -- and that includes multimillion-dollar endorsement deals. Possessing an almost otherworldly talent, Allen Iverson is determined that everyone -- his mom, his homeboys, his cousins -- benefit from it. By embracing his roots and refusing to conform, Iverson has won fans and admirers far beyond the boundaries of the sports world. Filled with exclusive interview material and unprecedented access to many of Iverson's inner circle, *Only the Strong Survive* provides the first in-depth look at the truth behind this newly minted legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a young Caucasian man, I would never claim to understand Allen Iverson's meteoric rise from a dilapidated home in Newport News to the sparkling arenas of the NBA. Surely Iverson, his unique talent notwithstanding, has faced and cleared obstacles I cannot even fathom, obstacles to which so many have succumb. No, it is only those dominated by arrogance and pride who write off Allen Iverson as a thug, a threat, a disaster, a "them." Having read this book, though, I am content to trade whatever pride and arrogance I have for a new vision of Allen Iverson that transcends the "worst days" his critics are so quick to cite. This book is looking for Iverson's core, digging deeper than Sportscenter highlight reels and police blotters. A careful reading reveals that there is more to Allen Iverson than cornrows, tattoos, snarls, and jumpers, even while each of these points to the man behind them. Indeed, if one wants to know anything of Allen Iverson, this book leaves you with one thought: no one loves like this man. Iverson loves the game others claim he is destroying. Only love could score 20 points with a broken hand. More than that, Iverson loves his friends and family. So many have denigrated his "posse" as a distraction or a poor influence. This book, though, tells of a shared concern and loyalty between Iverson and his friends that existed long before the NBA millions and will surely survive his withdrawal from the spotlight. The importance of this love to Iverson's life cannot be overstated, but that's not the story you'll read in any newspaper. You will find that passion in the pages of Larry Platt's book, and it is a passion with which everyone can sympathize. I do not know Allen Iverson. I know only what I could pull out of this book.

One of the things I look for in a basketball biography is a person with an interesting story. Allen Iverson certainly qualifies. This biography is written by Larry Platt, the unofficial hip-hop hoops biographer and author of *Keepin' It Real*. Platt tells Iverson's story, starting with his mother's

upbringing through Iverson's - starting with his life in the rough Newport News, Virginia ghetto, through his 2-year college stint at Georgetown and through first six seasons in the NBA with the Philadelphia 76ers. The best part about the book is that it goes into detail on many of the controversial events of Iverson's life: the bowling alley incident in high school, his "practice" rant to the media, his arrest for allegedly throwing his naked wife out of his house, his rap album, his "disrespect" of Michael Jordan, and his relationship with Larry Brown. The media worked overtime to paint him as a 1-dimensional thug, but it never seemed to add up when you saw him dote over his children in interviews: this doesn't jibe for a guy who wants to be a thug at all costs. I mean, seriously, a warm spot for kids? Platt paints a more complete picture of Iverson, adding depth to the media character. He exposes where the media screwed up by not correcting their own mistakes, and on occasion why they would hold a grudge. He explains Iverson's problems with Larry Brown (as well as Brown's with Iverson, which was mentioned numerously by the press). He also explains Iverson's close relationships with his friends and mentors. Platt is one of the best authors at explaining the hip hop generation. His writing is quick, easy, and entertaining. He goes into detail about the problems white middle class America has with embracing a hip hop superstar.

Only the Strong Survive: The Odyssey of Allen Iverson by Larry Platt Allen Iverson grew up a poor child in the streets of Hampton and Newport News, Virginia. Although this was a place of many hardships for him, it was also the place where his talent that would eventually make him rich started. The young Iverson loved to play football, often going against much bigger kids as if it was nothing. He possessed a great toughness that allowed him to be hit over and over again and still come back as if nothing had happened. However, one day coming back from playing football, Allen's mother told him to get ready for basketball practice. He seemed outraged; "Basketball is for sissy's" he told Ann, but she forced him to go anyway. Allen cried the whole way to practice; little did he know it was the greatest thing that could have ever happened to him. Allen Iverson was a great athlete as a kid and still is today. His talent in sports is definitely his claim to fame. Without it he might still be on poor on the streets now like he was as a kid. His life changed completely the day after he decided to enter the NBA Draft and leave Georgetown University behind. Taken as the first pick of the 76ers in 1996, Iverson instantly became one of the top players in the league. However, even though he was one of the most respected players on the court, he was the least off it. Many people disapproved of his gangster looks and the way he carried himself outside the gym. Nevertheless, fans of the NBA eventually fell in love with not only Iverson's play, but also the person himself. Although he is an incredible player, Iverson has yet to win a championship; his closest chance came in the NBA Finals

of 2001 when the 76ers lost to the Lakers in 5 games of a best-of-7 series.

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