

By Chance

Rick Shortle

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A greased-lightning text, By Chance is the inspiring memoir of a self-motivated and accomplished racer.

Rick Shortle—a former home repairman who leveraged his passion for motorbikes into a career behind the wheel, racing on speedways to become a multicircuit race champion—traverses literary and real-world motorways in his memoir *By Chance*, a true behind-the-wheel experience that pairs the challenges of driving with the challenges of living.

Over his career as a racer, Shortle came to believe that teamwork creates paths to success. Each high-paced chapter of his book traces both his victories and his defeats—with raising a family, loving his wife, plastering houses, and building a professional racing profile. The book progresses in time with his successes: Shortle recalls climbing the ranks of education and experience that built to his eventual expertise, all the while struggling to balance his work and home lives.

Further, from his rural racing beginnings on a grass-track speed bike in farmyard races to his experience with full autosport racetracks, the book ably conveys the sounds, smells, and crowd reactions of racetrack life. Its moment-by-moment, sensory scenes switch between memories with speed: on one page, Shortle recalls pushing himself from fourth place to first; on the next, he transitions to describing the smells of engine grease while rebuilding a chassis for his next race.

After being injured, Shortle faced new and unexpected challenges to his career. But in covering this difficult time, the book concentrates on the positive, expressing how he was strengthened and helped toward recovery by the support of others and by his desire to return to his wife and daughter—and by his unflappable racer's drive. Indeed, the book celebrates Shortle's support team, including his partners, sponsors, teachers, and competitors—sometimes to the exclusion of audience interest. And though it is concise and consumable, its prose is plagued by grammatical errors and clichés that undermine even exciting scenes, as with "I was ejected from my Bike, thrown into the air and end up landing in the Dog track. I remember it as if it was yesterday; everything went silent, as if nobody was around." Still, it does a convincing job of detailing rural dialects, the niceties of construction work, and facts about automobile chemicals and mechanics. In this way, it remains informative throughout.

The inspiring memoir of a self-motivated and accomplished racer, *By Chance* promotes the values and rewards of growth, personal fulfillment, and the richness of community.

CID GALICIA (October 6, 2023)

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