

Cleveland Wins a Championship: The Story of the 2016 Cleveland Cavaliers

Jeff Attinella

Steve Madden, Illustrator

It Had To Be Told Publishing (Jun 1, 2017)

Softcover \$17.99 (40pp)

978-0-9989440-3-6

Young sports fans will find this a fun keepsake and memento of the Cavaliers' historic 2016 season.

Sports fan and professional soccer player Jeff Attinella presents a kid-friendly tribute to the 2016 Cleveland Cavaliers in his picture book *Cleveland Wins a Championship: The Story of the 2016 Cavaliers*.

With an epic come-from-behind effort, the Cavaliers won the NBA title in 2016, the first major sports championship for Cleveland since 1964. Attinella provides background for the monumental win by detailing the city's hapless teams and near-miss moments throughout the years; in a series of roughly rhyming lines, the author reviews the history of Cleveland's baseball, basketball, and football teams—the latter with the rhyme: "The Browns are the Browns. / What more can I say? Life as a fan are truly dog days."

The book is an equal partnership between words and pictures, and illustrator Steve Madden excels throughout. The line above is represented by a group of forlorn-looking Browns fans, some covering their heads with paper bags. Later, specific NBA players, drawn in a colorful, caricature-like style, will be easily recognizable to fans. Attinella proceeds to focus on Cavaliers star LeBron James, from the time he was first drafted into the NBA as a Cavalier to his leaving the team for Miami to his triumphant return to Cleveland. Tracking the Cavaliers' rise to the upper echelon of NBA teams, Attinella also sets up their dominant 2016 nemeses, the Golden State Warriors, and finally depicts the dramatic events of the final series.

Many sports fans, especially those in Cleveland, will be well acquainted with the names and faces featured in the book, but others may have a bit of trouble grasping the full meaning of lines like "Dan Gilbert penned letters" and "Oracle was shocked," or players referred to by nicknames, as in "Delly, Love, and J.R. would all join the team." Gilbert is the owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers; the Warriors play in Oracle Arena; and Matthew Dellavedova, Kevin Love, and J. R. Smith were all players on the 2016 Cavaliers team. Madden's drawings get the larger points across, regardless of one's familiarity, or lack thereof, with these references: people were mad when LeBron left Cleveland, everyone was surprised at the Cavs' comeback, and LeBron's supporting cast was crucial to the team's success.

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PETER DABBENE (August 10, 2017)

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