



Growing Up with Wolves

Andy Fincher

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Growing Up with Wolves is the memoir of a dedicated soccer groupie who experiences the victories and losses of his favorite team.

Andy Fincher's memoir *Growing Up with Wolves* chronicles his support for his favorite English soccer team, the Wolverhampton Wolves, from the 1970s to the 1990s.

In the text, Fincher recalls his travels from game to game, all over England and across Europe. He goes into great detail about how the players performed, his voice characterized by dry humor and a self-deprecating tone. He portrays himself as a kind of sports groupie everyman. His loyalty to his team, the Wolves, sometimes causes him trouble and forces him to make sacrifices.

The volume of details in the text is remarkable. Fincher recounts every game, player, win, and loss. Full of local color and regional history, the book incorporates details about the Wolves that will be best appreciated by fellow diehard fans. Still, Fincher's passion about his team and exploits as spectator are amusing.

In its focus on soccer specifically, the book recalls happy times in which Fincher really felt like a part of a larger movement. It is small slice of soccer history. Still, the most relatable moments occur in more general episodes, sometimes not even related to the games. These include a memorable account of Fincher dislocating his knee while hiking and being carried down a mountain by his mates, only to have the knee relocated as the door to the van slams into it.

Because the geography, settings, and discussions of the team's activities are a narrow and esoteric framework to work with, the book reads more like a personal journal than anything else. Its musings reinforce Fincher's own sense of being an average Joe, given to pint drinking and girlfriend troubles.

Coming-of-age elements come in, too. Fincher encounters mature people and navigates unfamiliar events; these experiences shape the way he sees the world. They also contribute to the man he becomes. Episodes are knitted together because of his sometimes rogue experiences. The fun lies in Fincher's irreverent but humble approach to life. Work and duty fade into the background so that leisure can be privileged. Prose is straightforward—and self-awarely so. Fincher foregrounds his lack of literary prowess, and the comment figures as another self-deprecating joke.

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PHILIP J. KOWALSKI (January 24, 2019)

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