

Man Up

Kim Oclon

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An uplifting coming-of-age novel in which a high school senior figures out how to be himself, Kim Oclon's *Man Up* finds David wondering how to come out to his baseball team.

Heading into his final year, David is feeling good. He has a spot on the varsity baseball team; he's hoping to receive scholarships from a few colleges. But he's also weighed down by his secret relationship with Tyler, the star of the track team and one of the school's few openly gay students. When Kevin, a classic bully who's the baseball team's hot shot, spots David and Tyler holding hands, he starts making snide homophobic comments and gets his dad to talk to the coach about removing "distractions" from the team.

When his best friend and most of his team turn against him, David finds solace in new friends, including Patrick, a quiet teammate with two moms, and Allie, a softball player who works in the school library and is a lesbian. They and Tyler help David to grow and understand that he has nothing to be ashamed of.

David and Tyler's tumultuous semester is followed through alternating perspectives. Their struggles are almost comically divergent: David is stressed about affording college and anxious about getting kicked off of the baseball team for being gay, while Tyler just wants to go to prom with his boyfriend. However, days and times are less clear as the novel progresses; whether events occur over hours or weeks is uncertain. Further, some of the students' homophobic attitudes seem dated for the Chicago suburbs, smartphone-saturated setting.

Man Up is an important and realistic young adult novel that deals with bullying, homophobia, and physical violence against the backdrop of varsity sports.

ASHLEY HOLSTROM (March / April 2020)

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