ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SELF-HELP

To Be the King of Diamonds
Walter Ryan Adams
Trafford
978-1-4269-5635-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

Walter Adams proffers heaps of compassion and sincerity in his inspirational self-help book, *To Be the King of Diamonds.* Sharing the most defining moments of his childhood—including losing two of his closest boyhood friends, and his struggle to escape deep bouts of depression and anger and somehow make sense of the tragedies—Adams confides in the reader how baseball was the one constant that helped see him through it all. Now a high school teacher and baseball coach, Adams offers his moving story as a lesson in life to students in his high school classroom. The lesson is indeed poignant: turn your anger and sadness felt through loss and adversity into a motivation to be the best you can be. The acknowledgments in the book include testimonials from students who affirm that they have been inspired by his story to make major positive changes in their own lives.

While growing up in a small town in Louisiana, the author knew at an early age what he wanted to do with life: play the game of baseball. He dreamed, like many boys do, of hitting the home run that wins the championship game for his team. However, he quickly realized he wasn't the best. More importantly, he did realize that being the best was not what really matters in life.

In the midst of adversity, Adams learns to overcome the seemingly insurmountable vagaries of life. Woven throughout the book are poems which sum up some of the powerful lessons he learned: "For it is not always how good you are / That makes one the best / It's the approach I bring to each at bat / That separates me from the rest…," and "When the finale should come to what I've begun / Mind you it matters not the outcome, because I've already won / Never perfect will I be or always right will I choose / But a better person am I from what I've gone through…"

Lovers of baseball will identify with the author's dreams and glory days of a childhood playing baseball. But the true test on the diamond is not about being the best player; it's about the power of friendship. Climbing out of adversity and depression is not so insurmountable

when there are good friends to buoy a troubled soul in the stormy seas of life.

Offsetting the impact of the touching stories told by the author is a steady stream of unforced errors in grammar and punctuation. The inky embarrassments are regrettable, taking away from the valuable life lessons to be reaped in the content. Proper editing would have raised this book into rarefied air. Yet, if readers can make the effort to ignore the book's editorial misdemeanors, they too will be able to reap the reward of what it really means to be "the king of diamonds." Just like the author, readers will snatch a moment of glory on the baseball diamond of life. Readers looking for a self-help book to give them direction in times of trouble will find what they need in this comforting book.

Gary Klinga