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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Waggle

Joe Redden Tigan
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"On a day that is 72 and sunny… The time to break 75 is now. That's what Conny was thinking. He thought that feeling of being outside on a day that is biologically perfect to human beings… is the greatest true feeling possible" Joe Redden Tigan writes.

Waggle the first novel by Tigan a published poet is the story of a game of golf and awakening social consciousness. On a spectacular day in the Chicago suburb of Carlsburg Conny Bromenn knows he must play golf. Characters are introduced in detail as he recruits three of his golf buddies for a round at Triple the Pines course where they are in the habit of betting on their game. Today Conny ups the ante by proposing not just a monetary wager but also consequences. A series of pacts are agreed to: if Conny loses to Buck on the front nine he will introduce carpooling legislation; if Buck loses to Conny he has to run for city council; if Clark loses to Tom he will develop a parenting training program; and if Tom loses to Clark he has to develop a better recycling program. Different wagers are made between Conny Buck Clark and Tom for the front nine the back nine and for the eighteen-hole total.

The tale relates in depth the emotions and mental states of four men out to play a game of golf as if their lives depended on the outcome. At times it is wonderful bliss: "Clark Bar saw the barbaric Celtic ancestry in Buck's eyes and the frothing of his mouth and the general twitching from stimulus overload which meant that Buck was so very close to the euphoria of the addict." But later the prospect of a birdie for Clark "could in fact put enough pressure on Buck to…cause him to miss his birdie putt…even inducing versions of visual and auditory hallucinations similar to schizophrenia."

The first nine holes are related almost stroke by stroke. The book is full of golfing rules and jargon male attitude and social commentary. While the book is generally well written at times the author distracts us with grammar. There are too few commas which interrupts the flow of reading. The book ends with a tie game after nine holes and leaves readers wondering whether the men will continue the stressful wager on the back nine. Readers will also wonder if the author cared about writing a story or if he simply used this platform to air his own social gripes. Ultimately the story is incomplete and unsatisfying but might be of some interest to avid golfers.
(August 21, 2009)

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