

## When Tigers Streak: The Michael Hart Story

**Paul Taylor**

IUniverse (Apr 27, 2019)

Softcover \$13.99 (214pp)

978-1-5320-7137-9

*Paul Taylor's absorbing sports story recounts the redemption of a high school football team because of the commitment of its players, their coaches, and their prolific running back.*

*When Tigers Streak* is Paul Taylor's inspiring sports story that focuses on the contributions of Michael Hart, a footballer whose impressive high school career resulted in numerous team records.

In the nineties, Paul Taylor wrestled with whether or not he should continue coaching the Onondaga Tigers, whose performance was at an all-time low. He and his team worked hard to revamp the team's performance, and William Spicer joined the coaching team to add his zeal to their efforts. The Tigers began to improve, but it was the transfer of a promising ninth grader, Michael Hart, that set the team on a winning streak, toward winning three state championships.

The methodical text first covers the history of the Onondaga Tigers before Hart's arrival, giving his sports story context. It conveys the coaching team's desperation and concern about whether the team could improve. The transformation of the team after Hart is added is remarkable, landing them far ahead of where they began.

Motivational, too, the book praises teamwork and emphasizes the contributions of different members of a team. The coaching team's leadership comes across as visionary, focused on players spending time together and creating a sense of brotherhood, laying the groundwork for improvement.

Spectacular games and moments build suspense, including a scene in which the Tigers play against the Cambridge High Indians, who seem undefeatable but who, thanks to a last-minute effort by Hart, ceded victory to the Tigers. Photographs highlight some such moments, including one of the Tigers' three state championship banners hanging in the gym. Each game's plays and scores are documented with care, resulting in a full scope picture of the team's performance. As scores are recorded, the team's upward trajectory is easy to trace.

Humorous moments are a constant feature, including an incident in which Taylor's foot was caught under a fence on a snowy night in which he says he cannot imagine being found dead, caught like a muskrat in a trap, after a win. Such moments break the tension of the riveting games. Taylor's personal life, including his decision to take on the head coaching position, is also covered, adding depth to the story.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (August 23, 2019)

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