



The Bones of a Season

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Fergus Sharkey has come from Ireland to London and settled in the historic surroundings of Greenwich, fabled home and birthplace of time. There the Irish immigrant falls in love with a northern English rose named Katy Prunty and soon begins to follow the fortunes of the local football team, Charlton Athletic.

To affirm the love of his team, Fergus decides to get a tattoo of the club badge, but this causes friction between Fergus and Katy and sets in motion the gradual decaying of their romance during the course of the football season. When Katy leaves for the coast, Fergus becomes embroiled in a relationship with the tattoo artist Dyana, whose young friend, a grime musician, has recently been gunned down in the street in broad daylight.

Set against the backdrop of Charlton Athletic's football fortunes, and a crime network that lurks on the horizon, Fergus begins to uncover the answers to the musician's murder as well as the layers of his decaying romance.

The Bones of a Season Details

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From Reader Review The Bones of a Season for online ebook

Karen Steinart says

Good read. A novel interwoven with topical social issues and a recent, dramatic season in Charlton Athletic's history. Characters are solid and believable, from the die-hard Charlton fan, to the two women who provide the romantic interest. Paul's love and knowledge of the 'beautiful game' shines through, but does not overshadow, nor detract from, the story as a whole. Second novel in a trilogy, so I now have to read the first and wait for the third!

Liz Stevens says

In general a good read. Found some of the football dialogue a bit much. Exciting at the end.

Steven Kay says

I was intrigued to see where Paul Breen was going to take this story: a follow up to The Charlton Men. The strongest thing in the first novel was the characterisation – especially the main characters: Fergus, Lance and Katy.

It is pleasing that the reader continues to get to know these characters, and the developing plot as the book progresses further builds interest. The football backdrop is still there – but that is all it is: a backdrop. The Bones of a Season is not really about football: it is about friendship and relationships, and people looking to make sense of their lives – so its appeal should be wider than football fans.

There are one or two loose plot threads that you think might go somewhere but don't: the women's football team for example, but the main plot is strong.

It was a relief not to be distracted by puzzling metaphors as I was in the first novel. In fact there were some I quite liked such as this: "each word in the sentence carried its weight like a curtain hook" – simple, but somehow works.

Some of the writing could be better: there is a misuse/overuse of dialogue tags, for example. Such as this: 'Sport wasn't for the working classes in those days,' Lance nodded. Or: 'Then came the Second World War,' Lance groaned. You don't nod words. You can't groan and speak at the same time. Generally it is better to stick to simple tags: "said," "replied," etc – and the fewer the better, or followed by an action separated from the dialogue.

There are some bits of authorial intrusion – little passages of information that are conveyed and which don't seem to fit into the story. Some of this is back-story that is needed for the reader to understand the plot, but it could perhaps have been introduced more subtly.

I also found the ending problematic from a police procedural point of view. Without giving too much away, it seems to me that the police act in an unrealistic way: more to serve the plot device than anything else. It would have been better to find a more realistic way to achieve the same ends.

Despite all this I did enjoy this novel.

38 other football fiction books reviewed at: <http://stevek1889.blogspot.co.uk/2014...>

Simon Campbell says

The Bones of a Season was a pleasant surprise; there's plenty of meat on these bones, and far more to this novel than the story of a football season. In fact the main character's love of football is less important to the plot than it is in service of a fully formed character (one of many) who guides you not only through the trials and tribulations of his life but also through time. The writing beautifully evokes the story's setting as the drama spirals out of the characters' lives and across South London's sprawling geography and history. These intertwining stories of immigrants, gangsters and juveniles (in fact these are all (his)stories of families) show us history repeating itself in a way that reminded me of the generational sagas of Monica Ali or Zadie Smith; in fact for a book with a football stadium on its cover this boys' own adventure is deeply devoted to its captivating tales of (oftentimes captive) women. That's not to say that this novel doesn't capture the romance of the beautiful game, but that it is equally concerned with the game of romance. The twists and turns, cliff-hangers and thrills of a football season are juxtaposed with the agonies and ecstasies of relationships and the intrigue of a detective novel, but in the end it's the strong characterisation that propels the story forwards; the characters are the constant in a melting pot that takes in football, gang violence, baking, people smuggling and bullying and still finds room for a couple of love triangles! Well worth a look.
