



The Crazy Game

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In the spirit of *The Game* and *The Blind Side*, a raw, raucous and unvarnished look at life between the posts.

No job in the world of sports is as intimidating, exhilarating and as stress-ridden as that of a hockey goaltender. Standing in the crease facing one-hundred-mile-an-hour slapshots, the entire game riding on your glove hand, standing on your head when necessary-all job requirements for those wanting to be the best goalies in the world. Now imagine doing that job while suffering high anxiety, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, and having your career nearly literally cut short by a skate across your neck.

The Crazy Game takes you deep into the troubled mind of Clint Malarchuk, the former NHL goaltender for the Quebec Nordiques, Washington Capitals and Buffalo Sabres. Even as a boy, Malarchuk faced such deep anxiety that he missed school and acted out at school and with his friends. His OCD changed the way he trained, and he was almost always the last player off the ice. When his throat was slashed during a collision in the crease, Malarchuk nearly died on the ice. Forever changed, he struggled deeply with depression and a dependence on alcohol, which nearly cost him his life and left a bullet in his head.

The Crazy Game Details

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From Reader Review The Crazy Game for online ebook

Matt Graupman says

"A Matter Of Inches" is an absolutely gut-wrenching and brutally honest memoir about so much more than hockey: mental illness, addiction, suicide attempts, and the elusiveness of personal control and redemption. Clint Malarchuk has suffered more than any man should have to and he has emerged on the other side, more or less intact, with a harrowing story that I couldn't put down.

Writing in a brisk, conversational, and frequently vulgar style, Malarchuk doesn't pull any punches, whether he's describing his troubled childhood, his time in the NHL, the injury that defined his career, or the demons that moment unleashed that led to decades of unbelievable pain. This is by far the best and most relatable book I've ever read about mental illness; I saw myself, albeit not as destructive, on every page. Malarchuk's honesty is going to help a lot of people.

Whether you love hockey (like I do... Go, Sabres!), suffer from mental illness (which I also do), or know someone who does, this is a must read. It's a tremendous book and I hope it helps the author as much as it does the reader.

Claire Humphrey says

This book was first described to me as "the best hockey story you've never heard". I hadn't really heard any hockey stories--I'm a casual watcher at best, a playoffs-only fan. Boxing's my sport. If someone had told me Clint Malarchuk is sort of the George Chuvalo of hockey, I would have got it. But honestly it wouldn't matter if I wasn't into sports at all. The Crazy Game had me right away with the prologue--Malarchuk opens with a description of the day he shot himself.

It's not a spoiler to tell you he lived to write the book. In fact, he's lived through more than many of us ever will. If you know anything about Malarchuk's career, you've probably heard about his claim to fame: the day a teammate's skate opened his throat and he nearly bled out on the ice. He was back in the crease just ten days later. Ten days! This is a guy who just will not quit, right? His fans and teammates applauded his toughness--but no one, least of all Malarchuk himself, thought about what that toughness was costing him.

From a hardscrabble childhood in an abusive home, through several failed marriages and a couple of trips to rehab, through a rocky career of hard training, hard drinking, and fights on and off the ice, to a diagnosis of OCD and PTSD, Malarchuk's life is a series of battles, with himself as the enemy more often than not. He's incredibly open, describing himself with honesty and humility, and it's a gift to see just how far he's come along the road to peace.

Read this for an intense view into a deeply troubled mind; read it for a portrait of devotion to hockey. Read it for an account of Malarchuk's amazing wife Joanie, who comes through for him even when she has every reason to run. Read it and cheer for a man who's still alive against overwhelming odds, and pray for him to keep on making the save.

Amy says

I don't even know what to say. There are so many things about this book I liked. First the courage that Clint has displayed throughout his life is amazing. The honesty about his depression and anxiety is really encouraging.

It seems like the majority of the books about depression are written by and for women.

Here is a tough guy, an NHL goalie opening up about his struggles with depression, anxiety and OCD. He is honest about the parts of it that may have propelled him to the next level but he also questions how his life would be different without it.

My hope is that this book offers a man, young man, athlete a perspective on depression and the others anxiety, OCD, PTSD a freedom in knowing he is not alone and he can survive. The bullet in his brain did not kill him for a reason and I hope his story saves one person from that incredible desperation.

Sydney Stype says

What a book. It is amazing that someone can go through so much and still live to tell the tale. It has taught me a lot in 243 pages and I suggest that everyone read this to see how sports can be so good for someone, but so bad.

Adam Helsel says

This is a great study in mental illness as well as a great sports biography. Bobby Orr might have been one of the greatest of all time but his book was a snooze.

Malarchuk recounts his upbringing in Alberta up through his playing career and beyond. The thread that runs through the entire story is a struggle with OCD, anxiety, and depression. This is amplified with Malarchuk's notorious injury which led him to deal with PTSD for a long time without realizing it.

This is the my favorite kind of hockey book. There are stories of "boys being boys" and lore of a different era. Also an opportunity to get a new perspective on players and coaches from Pascal Leclaire to Mike Keenan.

If you are a stat nerd or are looking for tips on playing butterfly this is the wrong book. This is an earnest account of a player who has and continues to go through it.

William says

An incredibly raw look at his life and struggles with OCD, PTSD, alcoholism, and depression and all that happened. Hockey fans will enjoy this book especially any who've suffered with or had family and friends with mental illness. The support of friends and family helped him immensely. This book was a very easy read and constructed in such a way to really let Malarchuk open up about so much of his life.

Amy Moritz says

I find first-person books by athletes tricky. I want to hear them in their own voice but so often the work lacks depth. Not the case here. It's haunting the way Clint Malarachuk is self reflexive about the two dominant themes in his life -- hockey and mental illness. Sure there are times where I wish the writing was smoother and the Kindle version left much to be desired in formatting at the beginning of chapters, but his willingness to share his story with such detail and heart stays with you. "Held inside, the truth is destructive." Powerful stuff. He wonders if his whole life his purpose was to battle mental illness so he could share his story. Perhaps. There is healing power in telling your story and the opportunity to create a new chapter. Simple? Yes. Easy? No. All the more reason to be grateful Malarchuk had the courage to share his and shed a light on the parts of life we think no one else understands.

C Voutsinas says

Remembered Clint because of the game but also since he was with the Nords during that playoff year vs. the Habs. This book is a non-stop punch to the gut but when one wonders how this man has woken up each day to battle his demons and returns the next day when he knows it will be a repetition of the same horror. Hope he keeps things at bay and holds on to Joanie. Tough book to read but a vital one for all to be aware of invisible disability.

David Pilon says

I am bumping my rating from 3 to 4 for the insight provided during Clint's difficult rehab experience. I've gained a whole new perspective on the difficulties of overcoming addiction. Powerful story.

bamlinden says

I've talked to a few people who have already read this book and enjoyed it.....but. That left me with a bit of a preset mind when starting this read.

What I can say quite confidently is that I enjoyed this book. It's a very raw story with numerous head-shaking moments. I've always equated Clint Malarchuk with the on-ice incident that nearly took his life. I don't see him as that anymore. He's a person who has good intentions and a good heart...but struggles with his demons - every single day.

The writing was good, but felt bouncy at times going from one topic to the next. And I thought some aspects of his life and career would have garnered more page time while others got the spotlight a lot longer than I anticipated.

The book has a very "stream of consciousness" feel to it. It's almost as if he's just letting it pour out of him. As a complete book it worked, but in small doses it can get a little frustrating to read.

An incredible story and Clint is very brave to have opened up his life to see it put to page. I have no doubt that it will open many people's eyes as well as help those who might be in a similar situation as Clint's.

John says

This is a great book. Clint was a hockey player. I remember him from my childhood. I thought he was a great hockey player and then he seem to disappear. I thought when I first got the read the book to start reading the book it was about him and be like most other hockey books. I was surprised at how honest and blunt he was. And how he didn't hide the fact that mental this has been plaguing him most of his life. In short I think it's an excellent book.

Budd Bailey says

It's odd to see yourself referenced in a book of any type, even if it's anonymously. I pop up in that manner in Clint Malarchuk's book, "A Matter of Inches." That demands an explanation.

I was working in the Buffalo Sabres public relations department when Malarchuk had his throat slashed during a 1989 game in Memorial Auditorium. It was as terrible a moment as you'd expect. I even took a frantic call in the press box from Malarchuk's brother, who had been watching on TV a couple of thousand miles away.

Two days later, the Sabres were again home for a game, and Malarchuk - who had gone through surgery and was released from the hospital - stopped by the Aud to pick up a few things. I suggested that it would be nice during a break to have him wave to the crowd during a break in the action, since the fans were part of that traumatic experience. My boss convinced Malarchuk to do so, although it wasn't easy.

I was one of the public address announcers at games, so I turned on the microphone and (as is mentioned in the book) said, "It's been a tough couple of days in the Sabre organization, but we thought you'd like to see someone. So at the Zamboni entrance, please welcome back Clint Malarchuk." The standing ovation, which included everyone on the ice from both teams, lasted three or four minutes. The doors were eventually opened so that Malarchuk could walk out on the ice and allow everyone to get a better look. It was an emotional moment.

Malarchuk's name has come up in the sports media in various ways over the years, sometimes associated with the accident. Now we can read his entire story in his book, which is a very unusual one by sports publication standards - mental illness is rarely discussed in the world of alleged fun and games - and it's not the least bit pretty. Interesting, yes; pretty, no.

It turned out that the accident was only one of Malarchuk's issues, albeit one of the biggest. He had an alcoholic father who exited the family during Malarchuk's childhood, and you can guess how that will mess up everything it touches. Clint also suffered from anxiety attacks, refusing to go to school at times. Throw in an undiagnosed case of OCD, and it's the recipe for disaster.

Hockey was his refuge, though, and Malarchuk was very good at goaltending. He worked very hard at it too, and moved up to the ladder to the point where he was drafted by the pros. There after an apprenticeship in

the minors, Malarchuk landed in the NHL. He played for the Quebec Nordiques and Washington Capitals - not at the top of the class at his position, but certainly a worthy NHL goalie.

Malarchuk hadn't figured out all of the demons yet during that time, and the accident added another large group of them. Within a year, Malarchuk was filled with anxiety, nightmares and ulcers, to the point where he drank a bottle of whiskey at a sitting in something close to a suicide attempt. His time as an NHL player ended shortly after that, and the transition to ex-player is a difficult one for even the most well-adjusted of people.

Malarchuk goes through the ups and downs of his life from there in almost painful detail. He'd seem to be headed on the right path, and then have a relapse almost have to start over. Malarchuk has been married four times in his life. After reading this, it's not amazing that the first three left him; it's amazing that the fourth one stayed.

The story's climax comes when a depressed Malarchuk actually shoots himself in the mouth in 2008. As could be guessed, he somehow survived it. But that doesn't mean the story of the medical recovery and the time in rehab isn't harrowing, because it certainly is. This is tough reading.

There is one aspect of the book that doesn't exactly ring true. Malarchuk's own descriptions of himself aren't particularly pleasant. It's part of his disease certainly, but he's not a likable or mature person as presented here.

Yet, those who knew him from his playing days will tell you that he was one of the good guys. I had a Washington writer tell me when Malarchuk was traded to Buffalo that "not only is Clint one of my favorite hockey players, he's one of my favorite people period." His sense of humor was a little quirky, but we passed off that and some of his actions to the fact that he was a goaltender. In the hockey business, goaltenders often are a different breed, perhaps because their job carries so much pressure with it.

By the end, "A Matter of Inches" hints that while Malarchuk has beaten back some of those demons for now, it always will be a battle to keep them at bay. But maybe getting it out of his system in this way will help him, and maybe he'll find comfort to know that many of the people he encountered on this journey are rooting him to register the biggest of victories. In the meantime, let's hope that this book offers a helping hand to others in a similar situation who will realize after reading this that they need some help, and don't have to face it alone.

Stefan Percy says

I am a huge hockey fan, and have been my entire life. I remember when Clint had his on-ice accident back in 1989. It was amazing that he survived that ordeal, and that he came back to hockey so quickly after that near death experience. Many others probably would not have been able to do that.

But after reading this book, I realize that his struggles were well before and after that fateful day in Buffalo so many years ago. Reading about his struggles with OCD, PTSD, Alcoholism, and everything else he dealt with in his life gave me a much greater respect for him.

I know that there is probably a few people that read this book and nodded their heads as they were able to relate to exactly what Clint was writing about. I know that I sure did.

This is so much more than a "hockey player's book", and I would encourage anyone that is struggling with mental illness, or knows somebody who is dealing with mental illness of any kind, to read this book.

Sara says

While I sympathize with Malarchuk's anxiety problems, and his PTSD, in reading the book, I find out that really, he is not a very nice person. He constantly belittles people, he is condescending, and he thinks everybody is in awe of professional athletes. I found his arrogance to be very disappointing. Just remember Clint, very few of us are so-called "jock sniffers"; when it comes to professional athletes, nobody really cares about how famous you used to be. In some ways, it's a decent read, but evidence of his meanness is ultimately a turn-off.

Tracy says

This is one of the most powerful books I have ever read! I remember watching Clint Malarchuk play and I watched the accident happen live on tv, it was terrifying. The strength and courage it must have taken to write this book is unimaginable and nothing short of admirable.
