



## Game Change

*Joseph Monninger*

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**Game Change** Joseph Monninger  
*Can one game really change everything?*

Seventeen-year-old Zeb Holloway works in his uncle's auto repair shop and spends his weekends deer hunting in New Hampshire's backwoods. He's a quarterback on his high school's undefeated football team, but he never plays. Why would he when T.T. Munroe—a walking, talking highlight reel—is around? That is, until T.T.'s injured a week before the state championship game.

Now Zeb's tapped to start. As he assumes the role of QB and team leader, it feels like the entire town is watching. Girls want to talk to him and adults want to shake his hand. When a college recruiter says Zeb could have a future beyond his small New Hampshire town, he realizes there's a bigger life out there for him...if he can play his heart out.

## Game Change Details

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Author : Joseph Monninger

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## From Reader Review Game Change for online ebook

### Anna says

I received this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

If you've wanted a main character that's a mix between Matt Saracen and Lucas Scott, here you go. Kind of. Zeb is the backup QB who needs to go into the game after the heavily recruited starter gets horribly injured during a game. Zeb also lives with his single mom and works with his uncle in an auto shop. Intentionally or not, the author made Zeb an amalgam of 2 main characters from 2 of the biggest sports shows of the aughts.

That being said, the book itself works. I've been trying to find a football book similar in feel to FNL for years and this is the closest I've come. Granted as a YA book, it doesn't quite capture the raw emotion and 3D characters of FNL. The speeches Coach K gave were reminiscent to the Coach Taylor speeches, but since he's not as developed a character, the impact doesn't resonate as much.

The love interest storylines happened quickly and a bit out of nowhere. This book spans a week but felt like it needed more time to really grab you and make you care. The same can be said about every relationship in the book.

The book itself is fine, but at 208 pages runs a bit short.

3.75 stars rounds to 4.

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### Beth says

Sports book that follows the interior thought of a boy suddenly thrust into the QB position for a single, championship game, and how that sudden promotion propels him into taking himself and his future more seriously, even if that future doesn't include football. Football is a tool for understanding oneself, not an end in itself for this guy.

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### John Driscoll says

Realistic portrayal of a teen (the backup quarterback on his school's football team) who is unexpectedly thrust into the spotlight when the starting QB breaks a leg right before the championship game. The book deals with the expectations of main character Zeb for himself and his future, as well as those of his family, friends, classmates, teammates, fellow townsfolk, and others when Zeb suddenly has everyone's hopes riding on his unprepared shoulders. Definitely worth a read.

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### Tim Weed says

Joseph Monninger is a master storyteller with an understated and cumulatively beautiful prose style. His

latest, *Game Change*, is one of the best sports novels I've ever read. It's one of the best young adult novels too—but I want to point out that it transcends both categories: it's bigger than simply a sports novel or a young adult novel. It's a gripping, profound, and deeply moving novel about friendship, family loyalty, and what it means to be alive.

*Game Change* is a page-turner, but it's also one that takes you by surprise in subtle ways. It serves up a vivid portrait of small-town New Hampshire peopled by characters as interesting and sympathetic as any you'll find in fiction. Characters that feel like your friends. For me, this was one of those rare novels that I was sorry to finish. It left tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat, and at the same time it left me with the exhilarated sense of having been immeasurably enriched and enlarged by the reading experience. What more can you ask?

If you're expecting a straightforward novel of football triumph, you may be disappointed by this book. But if you allow yourself to read it with an open heart, you'll reap rewards that can only be offered by great and enduring works of literature. Highly, highly recommended.

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### **Mason says**

This book is about a pretty normal high school student. He works in his uncle's auto shop and he goes hunting somewhere in New Hampshire. He is also a backup quarterback on his amazing football team. So he seems pretty normal, all until one night where everything changes in just one snap. On Zeb's football team, the main attraction, the highlight reel, their star qb who lead their team to an undefeated season, had a nasty injury which changed the course of their season in an instant. It was all the sudden Zeb's time to shine and show everyone he wasn't just a backup.

In my opinion, this book is a very well explained story of an underdog finally getting his chance to shine. It has an underlying meaning/moral that no matter what your doing or if your not the best at something, just keep on trying and never give up because you never know when your up next!

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

#### E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Zeb's life is pretty simple-- he works with his uncle in his auto body shop and goes hunting with him, he tries to help out his hard-working, single mother, and he plays on the football team. When the star quarterback, T.T., breaks his leg in a game, Zeb finds that he might have a chance at opportunities outside of his narrow life in a small New Hampshire town. In the week leading up to the big game, he is given interesting offers from T.T.'s former girlfriend, a popular cheerleader named Stella, his coach, scouts, and a former classmate, Ferron, who has moved back to town. His friend Hawny is there to encourage him to do his best, but also keeps him grounded. Doing a good job in the championship game might change his life, but what if a knee injury gets in the way? What if he just can't play well enough?

Strengths: The cover on this is fantastic-- the text could be about a boy who knits, and my readers would still pick it up! Good use of stock photo, HMH! I really liked Zeb, Stella has a realistic if shallow presence in the book, and Ferron is fantastic. I loved how she brought Zeb to Thanksgiving dinner and her family made him feel welcome. The hardscrabble background is interesting, and I liked the athletic trainer and coach a lot.

Weaknesses: Several f-bombs, and several...awkward moments. There's a scene in a history class where Native Americans are discussed in a way that made me feel uncomfortable, and there are some turns of phrase that were just odd. I liked this better than this author's Crash or Whipporwill.

What I really think: So torn. I really do try to buy all of the football books, but this one might just come down too far on the Young Adult side for my readers. Would I have bought a copy if the f-bombs hadn't been there. Absolutely.

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### **Jackie says**

DNF @ 15%.

I feel so bad for DNFing books but why should I keep reading if the first few chapters don't interest me???

From what I gathered, Game Change is a book that takes place over 7 days. During a football game, star quarterback T.T. injures his leg and won't be able to keep playing for at least a couple months. Some sort of football championship takes place in a weeks time, which is why the main protagonist Zeb has to step in and take over T.T. position as quarterback.

I requested this book on Netgalley months ago, but I have to admit that I didn't actually read the synopsis. I was intrigued by the cover because I haven't read a book about football before! We don't have football here in Germany so I was excited about this one! I think my mistake was not reading the synopsis because my expectations were super high and I already kind of made up a story in my head about what this book could possibly deal with?????? Stupid, I know.

Anyway, I read the first chapter and it wasn't bad by any means—I personally just couldn't connect with the main character! I seem to have a hard time connecting with male characters in general, especially if they're not *extremely* well-developed!

So, I guess you could say this was a "it's not you, it's me" thing. I feel like fans of football would actually really enjoy this novel! It uses a lot of football terms and there's talks with the coach and stuff which was nice! I just made the mistake of thinking this novel was going to be something it's not and having high expectations that weren't met.

Apparently, there's also a love interest (god, I hope it's not Stella aka the girlfriend of the injured quarterback because that would just be BAD) and from a review I've seen, it develops quickly and unrealistically which makes sense because this novel does take place over a week—so I'm assuming it'd be very insta-lovey!

DNFed and no star rating because I didn't finish it!

\*Thanks to HMH Books for Young Readers for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review! This did not affect my opinion in any way!\*

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### **Noelle says**

I've read some of Monninger's adult fiction before and love his New England influence, and many YA

readers from Maine will find appeal in his familiar New Hampshire setting.

This YA novel considers several predictable motifs related to high school football : the big championship game, the injured star quarterback, the underdog back-up player, the troubled home life, and the trouble with the girlfriend to name a few. While the plot was predictable, Monninger crafts characters who are fully fleshed out and he uses language to evoke emotion in descriptions of the characters and the setting. I found this book would be a great recommendation for students who are looking for a sports-themed book but who might be ready for a more literary choice than what Lupica and other noted YA sports authors have to offer. Monninger's work elevates the football genre.

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### **Samantha (WLABB) says**

A coming-of-age tale, which evoked the quiet spirit of Friday Night Lights.

Zeb was content. He was finishing high school, helping his uncle at the shop, hunting deer with his best friend, and being the back-up QB for his high school team. Then the team's star got injured in the second to last game of the season, Zeb was suddenly thrust into the spotlight.

The responsibility of leading his team in the state championship game made Zeb take a good hard look at his life and himself. His eyes were opened to so many things, and he began exploring his future. He realized that some of the things he thought he wanted were not right for him, and he opened his mind and heart to other possibilities. He also acknowledged some things he didn't recognize as positive things in his life, and all of this showed a ton of growth.

Monninger created a super likable MC with Zeb. I was rooting for him and cheering every time he made a good decision or took a step in the right direction. I kept reading because I cared about Zeb. The book was also filled with a bunch of other colorful characters. Zeb's uncle and best friend provided a lot of humor, as well as an interesting look into the way people live in rural settings. I grew up in Brooklyn, so I found those bits very interesting. Aside from Zeb, my favorite character was Feron. The moments she shared with Zeb on page, were among my favorites of the books.

This book was a quiet read, and really captured that tone of Friday Night Lights. It does not hit you over the head, because Zeb is not that type of guy. I don't have a problem with that approach, however, I am known for being big on endings. I think I understand the point that Monninger was making with the ending, but I will not lie, I kept swiping on my Kindle, looking for more. I get that in a quiet way, which matches the tone of the whole book, Zeb was acknowledging his life and being totally honest with himself and those around him, but I personally needed a little bit more there.

Overall, I enjoyed this book. It's a nice change of pace for me and I found it to be a very thoughtful coming of age story.

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## **Sue Holmes says**

\*I was voluntarily provided a complimentary review copy by the publisher.

I was nervous going in as I know nothing about American football, but despite being more technical than I expected I was swept up in the riveting story and didn't feel lost at all.

The gritty and complex characters with their tough outer shells were so well developed that they came to life as they showed the reader inch by inch their inner souls.

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## **Patrick says**

A short but solid read. I really like sports books so I probably rated this a little higher. I got some serious Friday Night Lights (Book, not the show) vibes from this. I wish it was a little longer and fleshed out some other points of view, but a good read.

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## **Bethany Miller says**

When high school football phenom T.T. Munroe gets injured a week before the state championship football game, the position of starting quarterback falls to second-stringer Zeb Holloway. In Zeb's small New Hampshire town, high school football is a big deal to most people even if it doesn't mean much to Zeb's mom and uncle. Zeb's life is not glamorous, and being put in the spotlight takes some getting used to. In the week leading up to the big game, Zeb is forced to consider his life and his future in a way he never has before.

Monninger succeeds in creating layered and compelling characters that rise above the expected stereotypes. Zeb's mother and uncle both have their issues but genuinely care about him. His best friend Hawny provides comic relief that is actually pretty funny (even to a non-teenage boy). Even his mother's boyfriend Arthur has some depth, and the dynamic between him and Zeb is not dramatic but feels very real. The only characters that fell flat for me were the two female love interests Stella and Ferron, who both felt under-developed.

The writing in this novel is elevated beyond what you would expect in your average sports novel. There were some really lovely sentences and turns of phrase, and the reader gets a real sense of place in the description of Rumney, New Hampshire and its residents.

At 225 pages this book is already pretty short, but it could have been tightened up even more. Dialogue seemed to go on too long at times, and there were a few incidents that didn't really add much to the plot.

Recommendation: Readers looking for intense play by play football action should look elsewhere. This is much more character driven than the typical sports novel.

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## **Taffy says**

Opening line:

"Later, in the week that followed, Zeb Holloway watched the injury form again and again."

A coming-of-age story told from a second string football players perspective.

Zeb Holloway doesn't plan on playing much on his high school football team, thanks to the awesome QB who is bringing the team to state. Until the QB is hurt. Zeb is thrust in the spotlight and he's not too sure what to think about the instant notoriety.

The story follows Zeb through the week leading up to the state game. He wrestles with who he is, where he's from and what he really expects out of life. Each day leading up to the game seem to solidify and center him in what he wants. Things move a little fast compared to what it might move in real life but I liked the day-to-day decisions and effects.

There are a few "F" bombs and a bit of swearing.

There is kissing.

There is "boy" humor.

Thanks to netgalley for the early read!

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## **Jesus Lopez says**

I highly recommend this book, probably one of the best books i've ever read. It's a really interesting book especially if you're interested in sports books. This book hooked me up just by reading the first page really good book.

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## **Anne says**

Zeb is a senior in high school and a quarterback on the football team in rural New Hampshire. However, he doesn't get much playing time as the first string QB has brought the team all the way to the state championships, which are in 7 days. However, an accident takes him out so Zeb gets brought up to take his place. Zeb has never gotten much attention before but now he is high profile due to this unexpected chance. It brings about some unexpected consequences as well as a lot of pressure.

Football fans will enjoy, so great for readers of Mike Lupica and Tim Green.

Some swearing, a little bit of kissing, and also some deer hunting - so don't give this to your animal lovers.

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