



February 10, 2017

Thwarted Ambitions and Deadly Deeds Recalled in Ex-Detroiter's Sports Memoir

Boise, Idaho—Using the Detroit sports scene of the 1960s and early '70s as the backdrop, Idaho author and former Motor City native Bob Evancho has published his fifth book, "Lost Lakers: Grosse Pointe to Grand Valley—Cake Eater Meets Convict."

Evancho's memoir is a tale that brings him full circle from his three years with the Grosse Pointe St. Paul High football team in the late 1960s, to Grand Valley State College (now University) as a member of the school's fledgling football program, to his current home in Idaho and back to a Michigan state prison where he reunites with former Laker teammate Reginald "Hook" Johnson, who is serving a life sentence for his involvement in five Detroit-area homicides committed in 1975.

With the book's foreword written by Pro Football Hall of Famer and Detroit native Joe DeLamielleure, "Lost Lakers"

(Bootleg Books, ISBN 1-5412-3908-3, 268 pages, \$14.95) recalls the author's

dogged and persistent—but largely unfulfilling—pursuit of sports during his 22½ years in Michigan before he moved to Idaho in 1975.

Born in the Motor City in 1952 and raised in nearby St. Clair Shores until he was 14, the author recalls his early love of baseball, his family's move from the suburbs back to Detroit's east side on the heels of the 1967 race riots, and his beloved Tigers' epic World Series triumph the following year.

"Lost Lakers" is in part a humorous response to "Goodfellows: The Champions of St. Ambrose," Rick Goselin's 2009 book about the storied Detroit Catholic League football program of the 1950s and '60s. "Here's an idea: How about a book about a *crummy* football league at a Catholic high school roughly the same size as St. Ambrose in the same part of Detroit from the same era?" Evancho writes in "Lost Lakers'" preface. "And why limit my mostly unfulfilling athletic endeavors to just my high school days? I could literally write a book about my lifetime of misbegotten athletic pursuits—my ill-fated attempt to play football at Grand Valley in 1972 particular."

With humor and candor, Evancho writes about his aversion to the outdoors, his general ineptitude in most things related to sports, and his mostly misguided efforts to play football at St. Paul and Grand Valley—Michigan schools that shared not only the same nickname but also a distinct lack of gridiron cachet at that time.

Unlike Grand Valley's current status as one of the top Division II football programs in the nation, the '72 Lakers were a woeful bunch in just their second year of intercollegiate competition—"a small-college football version of an expansion franchise in pro sports: an inconsequential collection of ragtag, mostly unwanted players, doomed—at least for the foreseeable future—to almost certain failure at the hands of superior opponents from established programs," Evancho writes.

It was at Grand Valley that Evancho and Johnson (aka Amin Abdullah Mu'min), an ex-con from Ecorse, first met. In May of 1974 Johnson was elected the college's student-government vice president and had seemingly turned his life around—only to play a role in five murders less than a year later.

And as Evancho writes about his reconnection with Johnson, "Lost Lakers" takes a much more serious tone. With Johnson's help, the author tells an intriguing and compelling story of how two divergent lives came crashing together—literally—on a football field, went in starkly opposite directions and reconnected more than 40 years later.

A 1975 graduate of Grand Valley, Evancho previously co-wrote and edited "Busted Bronco: From Addiction to Redemption" (with Joe O'Brien) in 2011; "Elegant Soul: The Life and Music of Gene Harris" (with the late Janie Harris) in 2005; and "Pokey: The Good Fight" (with the late Pokey Allen) in 1997. He also served as writer/editor for "Ida Tours the 44: A Book of Idaho's Counties," which was published by Boise State University in 2010.

"Lost Lakers" may be purchased at bootlegbooksboise.com, createspace.com or amazon.com.

Bootleg Books • bootlegbooksboise.com • bobevancho@bootlegbooksboise.com

Editors: To obtain a copy of "Lost Lakers" for possible review in your publication or other media outlet, contact the website or email above.