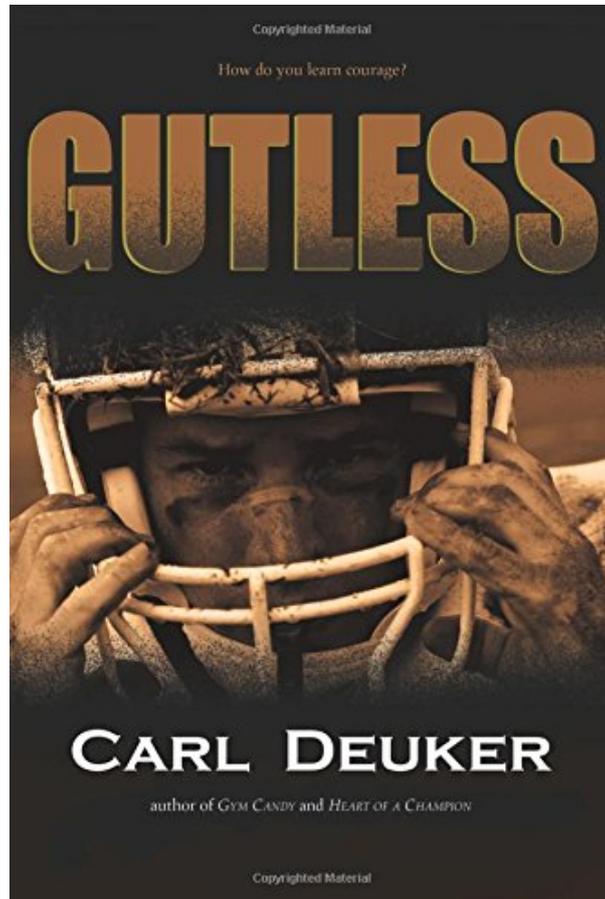


GUTLESS BY CARL DEUKER



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How do you learn courage?

GUTLESS



CARL DEUKER

author of *GYM CANDY* and *HEART OF A CHAMPION*

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From the author of *Gym Candy* comes a novel of football and bullying, finding friends and finding courage.

With both good speed and good hands, wide receiver Brock Ripley should be a natural for the varsity team, but he shies away from physical contact. When he gets cut from varsity, he also loses his friendship with star quarterback Hunter Gates who begins lashing out at not only Brock, but also Brock's friend, the quiet and smart Richie Fang. Brock wants to stand up for Fang, but he is younger, smaller, and doesn't want to cause problems. But when the bullying goes too far, will Brock be able to face his fears, stop being a bystander, and prove to himself that he is brave enough?

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No guts, no glory?

By E.M. Bristol

Brock Ripley doesn't want to be like Hunter Gates, a fellow teammate and star on their football team, but he has to admit the guy's got "it," the charisma that automatically draws people to him. But Hunter's dad does give Brock the opportunity to practice football, something his own dad, who has recently become disabled, cannot do. But Brock still recognizes the bully in Hunter, especially after Hunter and his friends begin to pick on Brock's friend, Richie Fang, the new kid at school, whose mom is terminally ill. Richie is funny, excels at multiple interests and is not afraid to push back if he feels it's the right thing to do. When Richie joins the football team and displays a gift, Brock hopes that this will smooth things over with Hunter and his group, but when it begins to look like things are getting worse, Brock must decide whether or not to take a stand.

Thoughts: It was interesting to see how high school coaches and sports program are handling the issue of concussions (as well as parents), now that information linking them to an array of serious health issues has been made public. The characters in "Gutless" are all aware of the recent controversy and must keep that in mind as they choose to play a sport now considered more long-term dangerous than in the past.

The author (as I am not) is clearly an expert on high school level sports like football and soccer and writes about them with authority. As I am not an expert, I can't speak to the accuracy, but all the jargon sounds legitimate to me.

The chapters are quite short - no more than a couple of pages, which makes for a choppy read that I found difficult to adjust to and be absorbed in for awhile at the beginning. It also took quite awhile before I figured out where the story was going.

Overall, it was easy to sympathize with Brock's dilemma, as most of us have had at least one time when we

should have spoken up and didn't. I wish there had been less sports jargon and more development of some of the secondary characters, but I enjoyed it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

I can truthfully say that even the most unathletic of readers will enjoy GUTLESS.

By Teen Reads

Brock Ripley was painfully aware of many things.

One: His father would never be the same and watching his parents try to be enthusiastic about things only made it worse.

Two: Hunter Gates was the notorious bully that crushed anybody who so much as looked at him the wrong way. Despite this, Brock desperately wanted to prove himself to him, especially since it was because of Hunter that Brock discovered his love for football, and that only made things worse.

Three: He didn't want to befriend Richie Fang. Brock had only asked if the seat was open, not if Richie wanted a best friend. The fact that Brock actually ended up liking the guy only complicated matters, which of course, continued making things worse.

Four: Brock couldn't seem to stand and fight, not even when his career in sports and his friendships depended on it. This was the worst of all. He was a coward, had a big, fat, yellow streak running down his back and everybody knew it.

Carl Deuker goes from family to friendship to sports and back in a mostly relatable story told from the point of view of Brock Ripley. I'm not sure how many people are naturally varsity football material like Brock, but I know that GUTLESS strays from the field enough to leave room for other relatable topics. Like Brock, everybody has problems and fears even if they always have a smile on their face. This was probably the main idea of the book (I swear I haven't spoiled anything) and Carl Deuker definitely did a great job at portraying it. The build-up of the story left me wondering when my prediction would occur.

As somebody who is far from interested in sports I can truthfully say that even the most unathletic of readers will enjoy GUTLESS. For the first time ever, I found myself enjoying a sport. There were times when I was really lost but even so, the football "plays" did not overshadow enough of a scenario to leave me completely at a loss.

The characters in GUTLESS were admittedly stereotypical. Richie is the overachieving foreigner. Hunter is the handsome jock that enjoys harassing those below him on the social pyramid. Brock is your average Joe that just so happens to have a paralyzing fear and a natural talent for football. Despite the small dissatisfaction of the lack of development from some characters, the climax was anticipated. I wondered chapter after chapter about when my prediction would come true. Every time something seemed to be over, it wasn't. The ending was surprisingly (and unusually) satisfying, though.

Even though GUTLESS was incredibly different from a book called FALL FROM GRACE by Charles Benoit, I found similarities in the main characters. So if you've read Benoit's book, make sure to check out GUTLESS.

On that note, if you like books about sports and facing fears, GUTLESS would be a great next read! Especially if you are a reader that has no qualms about facing facts and enjoys insight on topics, such as bullying, that are widely ignored at schools.

Reviewed by Flor H., Teen Board Member

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Fine sports fiction.

By J.Prather

I'm a big fan of Carl Deuker's sports fiction and feel that he has a unique voice and an uncanny ability to combine the excitement and suspense inherent in sports with some truly piercing real life situations. Gutless is a fast paced, searing look at bullying and will hook readers from the start with a cast of complex characters and some of Deuker's finest sports writing.

Brock is a young athlete dealing with an ailing father and searching for his place in a new high school, a new team and new friends. He worries about his own courage when he hesitates on the playing field and in the high school hallways. He's a boy afraid of contact and confrontation trying to succeed in a world where both are required. His relationship with his nerdy friend Richie is the highlight of the novel, and their dialogues are authentic and keep the pages turning. Brock foreshadows the ending pretty early on, so the reader knows something bad is going to happen, just not what it is. This creates so much suspense that it makes it hard to put this book down.

Soccer fans and football fans will find plenty to admire here. I love a good football story and nobody writes football quite like Carl Deuker. Reluctant readers will appreciate the fast pace and the short chapters. All sports fans will recognize the genuine emotions brought about by victory and painful loss. Teens dealing with their own drive to succeed and searching for their own path will also find much to relate to in Brock's struggles to prove that he's not gutless. It's a story of triumph over fear and learning how to do the right thing even when it doesn't seem to be the right thing at all.

Most of Deuker's books are laser focused, but this one wanders around a bit too much for my taste. The author took a few too many narrative side trips, especially in developing the Hunter character. So despite losing a star due to lack of focus, there's no denying this is a great read and an enthusiastic recommend.

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