



Black Men Can't Shoot

Scott N. Brooks

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The myth of the natural black athlete is widespread, though it's usually talked about only when a sports commentator or celebrity embarrasses himself by bringing it up in public. Those gaffes are swiftly decried as racist, but apart from their link to the long history of ugly racial stereotypes about black people—especially men—they are also harmful because they obscure very real, hard-fought accomplishments. As *Black Men Can't Shoot* demonstrates, such successes on the basketball court don't happen just because of natural gifts—instead, they grow out of the long, tough, and unpredictable process of becoming a known player.

Scott Norman Brooks spent four years coaching summer league basketball in Philadelphia. And what he saw, heard, and felt working with the young black men on his team tells us much about how some kids are able to make the extraordinary journey from the ghetto to the NCAA. He tells the story of two young men, Jermaine and Ray, following them through their high school years and chronicling their breakthroughs and frustrations on the court as well as their troubles at home. *Black Men Can't Shoot* is a moving coming-of-age story that counters the belief that basketball only exploits kids and lures them into following empty dreams—and shows us that by playing ball, some of these young black men have already begun their education even before they get to college.

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