



# The Assist: Hoops, Hope, and the Game of Their Lives

By Neil Swidey

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## The Assist: Hoops, Hope, and the Game of Their Lives By Neil Swidey

Jack O'Brien is a high school basketball coach extreme in both his demands and his devotion. With monastic discipline, he has built a powerhouse program that wins state championships year after year while helping propel players to college. He does this as a white suburban guy working exclusively with black city boys who make the daily trek across Boston to attend Charlestown High School, where the last battles of the city's school desegregation wars were fought a generation ago.

*The Assist* is a gripping, surprising story about fathers, sons, and surrogates, all confronting the narrow margins of urban life. The book follows the players on their hunt for a state title. But it also stays with them, to see how young men who seldom get second chances survive without their coach hovering over them—and how he survives without them.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this engaging book about Boston's Charlestown High School basketball team, Swidey, a staff writer for the *Boston Globe Magazine*, explains that [b]eing part of the Charlestown program was no guarantee that a kid would become a success.... But dropping out of the program dramatically increased the odds that he wouldn't. Head coach Jack O'Brien benefited from the team aside from its gaudy won-loss record. Unmarried and with a shattered family history, O'Brien found that the rigid team structure... offer[ed] the trappings of home. Like a concerned parent, O'Brien worked year-round to keep his kids away from the overwhelming daily wave of crime and bad influences and into the security of a college-educated future. Swidey masterfully shows over the course of two seasons the struggle O'Brien and his players face in maintaining success on and off the court. The coach observes the lives of his two star players, Ridley Johnson and Jason Hood White, go in very different directions after they land out-of-state college scholarships. Swidey expertly examines the slippery slope of Charlestown's success, tying it into Boston's disastrous busing scandal and an underwhelming legal system that perpetuates crime, while he builds narrative momentum and details his subjects with the touch of a skilled novelist. This is a prodigiously reported, compulsively readable book that readers (sport fans or not) will savor. (*Jan.*)

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Review

### A *Washington Post* Best Book of 2008 Selection

About the Author

**Neil Swidey** is a staff writer for *The Boston Globe Magazine*. His writing has won the National Headliner Award and been featured in *The Best American Science Writing*, *The Best American Crime Reporting* and *The Best American Political Writing*. He lives outside Boston with his wife and three daughters.

### Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

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**James Murray:**

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading addiction give you

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#### **Pablo McNamara:**

The book untitled The Assist: Hoops, Hope, and the Game of Their Lives contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains her idea with easy method. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read that. The book was compiled by famous author. The author will bring you in the new era of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open up their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice examine.

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