

BOOK REVIEW

Touched: The Jerry Sandusky Story by Jerry Sandusky with Kip Richeal (Champaign: Sports Publishing, Inc., 2000), 238 pages, paperback; \$16.95.

Anyone who has ever spent time in the sports section of the local bookstore is familiar with ghostwritten autobiographies. They're popular and easy to produce. The subject of the autobiography talks into a tape recorder, and tells stories about his life and career. Then the ghost writer takes the tapes and rearranges the material into a coherent story. There are usually no attempts to check the facts and make sure the subject's memory is correct, so sometimes errors slip in. But on the whole, it's a nice, quick way to get insight into a person's thoughts, and see what it was like, from an emotional standpoint, to really be there.

Touched: The Jerry Sandusky Story follows the usual ghostwritten autobiography pattern. There are a few things though, which set the book apart from the others on the shelves. First, while Sandusky is well known, he was a career assistant coach. After brief stops at Juniata College and Boston University, he spent 32 years at Penn State, the last 23 as defensive coordinator. Assistant coaches, even great assistants, rarely get their own books. One of the things Touched does well is to let the reader see college football through an assistant coach's eyes. There are stories about recruiting trips, film exchanges, coaching from the press box, and working together as a member of the staff. For anyone who ever wondered just what life was like for an assistant coach, Sandusky's book is a good place to start finding out.

What also sets this book apart from other sports autobiographies is Sandusky's other career. In addition to having been Penn State's defensive coordinator, Sandusky is the founder and an active manager of a charitable organization named The Second Mile. The Second Mile started as a small program to help at-risk children. The idea behind the organization came from Sandusky's own experiences growing up with parents who ran a recreation center in the small city of Washington, Pennsylvania. Art and Evie Sandusky never made a lot of money in recreation, but both believed that by providing wholesome recreational activities and a caring atmosphere, children who might otherwise have strayed could be led to productive lives. Jerry agreed. Using the connections he made as a football coach he was able to build The Second Mile up from an organization that served 20 children, into one that serves over 150,000 in eight programs.

In many ways it is The Second Mile, rather than his football career that is the center of Sandusky's book. The first chapter begins with the story of how he wrote the press release after President Bush named The Second Mile the 294th Point of Light, not some Penn State victory. From a football perspective, what is most interesting about The Second Mile is how much the charity and Penn State football team were intertwined. Nittany Lion players served as mentors for local, at-risk children, and became involved in fund raising golf tournaments and Second Mile activities. At the same time, some of the children involved with The Second Mile attended Penn State's summer football camps, and even traveled with the team to bowl games. At times its hard to tell where coaching and playing football end, and the Second Mile begins.

The only drawback to Touched: The Jerry Sandusky Story is Sandusky's own self-deprecating sense of humor. No one likes a person who can't laugh at himself. Sometimes, though, to hear the way Sandusky tells it, you'd imagine the only reason Joe Paterno kept him around all those years was for comic relief and to have someone to yell at. The success of the Penn State program suggests otherwise. Overall, this is a good book. It's one of the few opportunities to read about the game of college football from an assistant coach's perspective. It also tells the story of a truly caring human being, whether it was for his players or country's children.

Harold Aurand Jr.