



## Home Field

*Hannah Gersen*

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**The heart of *Friday Night Lights* meets the emotional resonance and nostalgia of *My So-Called Life* in this utterly moving debut novel about tradition, family, love, and football.**

As the high school football coach in his small, rural Maryland town, Dean is a hero who reorganized the athletic program and brought the state championship to the community. When he married Nicole—the beloved, town sweetheart—he seemed to have it all—until his troubled wife committed suicide. Now, everything Dean thought he knew about his life and the people in it is thrown off kilter as Nicole's death forces him to re-evaluate all of his relationships, including those with his team and his three children.

Dean's eleven-year old son Robbie is acting withdrawn, and running away from school to the local pizza parlor. Bry, who is only eight, is struggling to understand his mother's untimely death. And nineteen-year-old Stephanie has just left for Swarthmore and is torn between her new identity as a rebellious and sophisticated college student, her responsibility towards her brothers, and feeling like she is still just a little girl who misses her mom. As Dean struggles to continue to lead his team to victory in light of his overwhelming personal loss, he must fix his fractured family—and himself. And what he discovers along the way is that he'll never view the world in the same way again.

Transporting you to the heart of small town America, *Home Field* is an unforgettable, poignant story about the pull of the past and the power of forgiveness.

## Home Field Details

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## From Reader Review Home Field for online ebook

### Megan Coppadge says

I received this book via a Goodreads giveaway courtesy of William Morrow.

This is the beginning of the blurb for this book. "The heart of Friday Night Lights meets the emotional resonance and nostalgia of My So-Called Life in this moving debut novel about tradition, family, love, and football."

Now this is totally misleading. Football plays a role in this novel but not a super big one. Maybe about 25%, maybe. Also I don't know where tradition plays a role in this novel as well.

I wasn't super impressed with this book but I liked it well enough to get through it. There were parts that I enjoyed but overall I was kind of disappointed after reading the description and then reading the book. Dean drove me nuts. Without dropping any spoilers... yes he's gone through a huge tragedy but the way he does some things after the death of his wife was just not right. He makes a change with his coaching life that I really liked and was very happy about that. However the way he handled certain things made me want to slap the guy and tell him to wake up. I really enjoyed reading his daughter Stephanie's parts. Her POV is part of the reason I kept going. She was real, honest and relatable and so were her younger brothers.

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### Raymond Rusinak says

Quite an enjoyable and interesting story. Doesn't quite live up to the hype of Friday Night Lights meets My So Called Life but none the less, still a good read

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### Kristin Shaak says

I think I hated this book. The first chapter is set six months prior to the rest of the book. The mother of the characters kills herself and the rest of the book is the aftermath. Okay I'm going to be honest. I hated the father - HATED HIM. The dude is an asshole. I'm pretty sure he only married Nicole because of her looks and then couldn't handle her mental health issues that she had told him about up front. He even says that she told him she tried to kill herself three times before they met! He is a high school football coach and has three kids who just lost their mom - does he try to understand his kids and help them grieve? No. He's too busy moaning and groaning about his life. He fucking cheated on his heavily depressed wife and then had a on-and-off thing with the woman throughout the following months after her death. He says he can't understand his daughter but doesn't even talk to her. She drives herself to move into her college dorm. One of his sons is spiraling and keeps acting out in school. You find out he was the one who found his mom but does the dad ever sit down and talk to him about it? No. He "doesn't understand" his kids. Honestly fuck this guy. He moved to a small town so he could be head coach at 25 and then bitches non-stop about the small town. He complains that his wife has never left and thinks he's so much more worldly than she is. He complains that he can't live up to her first husband in their minds because they were high school sweethearts and he died so tragically.

I really liked the daughter, Stephanie. Her chapters were sad and she really wasn't coping well but had no idea. Her insights about her mom broke my heart and god the guilt she had about her mom's mental illness. There is a scene where she's on a bad trip at a college party that made my chest ache. All the things she had bottled up all came to the surface at once. One of the brothers, Robbie, had a chapter from his point of view and it was so good and so heartrending.

I only picked up this book because it was blurbed as "Friday Night Lights meets My So-Called Life." I think it could have been a great book if the father's chapters were eliminated completely. If the whole book was from Robbie and Stephanie's POV, I'm sure I would have enjoyed it more. I really wish the author had allowed Nicole to speak - we never really get the whole story there and I wish we would've. The end is a fucking cop-out.

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### **Stan Blackburn says**

2.5 stars. This story and characters kept me wanting to read, which is a good sign. The characters, however, often became irritating and unpredictable. The older daughter was the most believable, however. Robbie and Dean were at best mildly irritating, at worst unbelievable. The author can craft sentences well but the plot is missing the "it" factor of a solid story. And then there are characters that are left unresolved, like Laura. It was okay.

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### **Diane says**

Hannah Gersen's debut novel *Home Field* is billed as a combination of *Friday Night Lights* and *My So-Called Life*. That's quite a high bar to set, and Gersen clears it with room to spare.

Dean is a successful high school football coach in a small Maryland town. He runs a terrific program, and is known and respected throughout the town. Years ago he married a young widow, Nicole, whose husband was a high school football hero. Nicole and her husband were high school sweethearts and had a young daughter, Stephanie, when he was diagnosed and died.

Nicole suffers from depression, perhaps she never got over the loss of the love of her life. Dean was smitten with her and young Stephanie, and they married and had two boys of their own, Robbie and Bryan.

As the story opens, Nicole commits suicide and is found by her eleven-year-old son Robbie. Stephanie is set to go away to college, and struggles with leaving her brothers and father to go so far from home. Robbie begins cutting class and acting out, and finally finds salvation by participating in the high school play.

Bryan has spending more time with Nicole's sister and her family, devoutly religious people. Bryan finds solace in religion, much to Dean's concern. He feels that his sister-in-law is unduly influencing his young son.

Coaching a successful high school football program is a time-consuming profession, and Dean comes to the conclusion that he needs to step down for the sake of his children. He also becomes involved with Robbie's school counselor, a woman he knew when she was a substitute teacher at his school.

Stephanie is trying to find her way in the world, and Gersen really nails the feelings of a young woman adrift. She is grieving the loss of a mother she loved, feeling angry that her mother abandoned them all, and sad that her mother was suffering so. She also feels guilty that she has left her brothers behind.

Reading this part of the story took me back to my own time going away to college, so vivid is the connection between Stephanie's experiences and most young women. Bravo to Ms. Gersen.

Just when Dean thinks he is losing it all, an opportunity to temporarily coach the girls cross country track team falls in his lap. He misses football, and he forms a connection with the girls that gives him a sense of control and accomplishment he is lacking in his personal life.

Gersen does a wonderful job with the setting and characters of her story. She has the small town atmosphere just right, and we care deeply about these people, even as we see them making mistakes. Dean in particular needs to learn the importance of verbal communication with his children. They need to talk about what happened to them, and he, like many men, has trouble with that.

Home Field is an emotional, moving book that touched my heart. Gersen's ability to write so beautifully and realistically in the voices of Dean, Stephanie and Robbie is quite an accomplishment. I recommend Home Field to anyone who loves a good family story.

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### **Annie ~ The Missstery says**

**Read the review here** >> Do you love the 90s and small-town stories? If so, you should get your hands on this book. It's a bit long and not a lot happens, but I felt like I was watching a beautiful film, one of those movies I used to love when I was kid. I really believe this could become a great film.

This is not one of those plot-driven novels I usually read, it's actually more character-driven: everything revolves about Dean, the high-school football coach, her teenage "daughter" Stephanie and her brothers Robbie and Bry. The story takes place in 1996, about two months after their wife and mother's unexpected suicide.

Mainly, this book is told by Dean and Steffy's points of view. Both storylines: Dean dealing with the children and his feelings for other women and Steffy at college, trying to figure out who she is, were equally appealing. I didn't lose interest at any point and both characters were interesting (although Dean was harder to like, especially when he seemed to care more about football than his children). However, the character I loved the most was Bry: he was so sweet and innocent that you couldn't help but adore him.

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### **Perri says**

I can sure see the stated resemblance especially to Friday Night Lights -an understated but powerful rendition of a family torn apart by tragedy. It made me reflect on mental illness, specifically depression and suicide, and how it impacts loved ones and causes unintended reverberations.

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### **Cindy says**

As one reviewer said, this is a cozy read. Almost too comfortable for me. It's the story of a football coach who loses his wife and is left alone with three children to raise. Dean is struggling to care for his children and understand and deal with their grief. He is also trying to overcome his own grief and unfortunately I didn't care for the decisions he made in his own now sad life. I was expecting more drama but somehow the story fell flat. Guess I wanted more football, more sensitivity from the dad, and characters that I really cared about. A very entertaining read but not memorable.

I won this book from LibraryThing.

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### **Lesley says**

I sadly say this took me forever to read, I would try a few chapters, put it down go back read some more but just never enjoyed it. Yes nostalgic of the 1990's and how a family deals with loss from a suicide, but I HATE sports so I wasn't that interested in this coach's life. Just wasn't for me, I am sure many others will enjoy it.

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### **Fatima says**

I received this book in a goodreads giveaway and I'm so glad i did because it's a beautifully written novel about family drama; a father, his teenage daughter, his two young sons, and the small town they live in. For anyone who grew up in the 90's or raised children during the 90's this book will remind you of home. I loved the characters and got attached to them instantly. The plot is both heartbreakng and heartwarming (I'll admit I cried more than once). Overall, I loved this book and highly recommend it! A must read!

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

I grew up in the county over from where "Home Field" takes place and I started high school in 1999 so I was excited to get a look at a world I knew through this book. Aside from the familiar setting, this book has a really good family drama at its center. Dean is his small town's football coach. His wife was the beauty queen. They have two kids that seem like they're on their way to success. It was an all-American story until Dean's life and the life of his kids is shattered when his wife commits suicide. Each person will have to find their own way to pick up the pieces.

The story mostly focuses on Dean and his daughter, Stephanie, who is desperate to get away from her small town for Swarthmore. I loved the way the author divided the book between these two. Dean is trying so hard not to show what a hard time he is having with his wife's death. I really liked how the author was able to get inside his head and show a really fascinating character that has more going on inside than he would ever admit. I also really liked Stephanie's character in the book. She is on the cusp of being an adult but has so

much turmoil rolling through her due to her mother's death.

This is a family that I will be thinking about for a long time. I really felt close to them throughout the book. The author really captures realistic emotions throughout the book so that the characters felt like real people to me!

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### **Chaitra says**

I wasn't completely sold on *Home Field*, but it wasn't completely awful either. Dean's a football coach, and I think that's part of it - I myself was never sporty, and try as I might I could not see things from his perspective, that sport is the be all and end all, it cures everything. I also thought Dean lacked empathy, and therefore I didn't feel I owed it to him to be sympathetic to his problems.

Dean is this typical jock, he's uncomfortable with anything or anyone who's different from him - his wife's mental issues are because she lacks focus and ambition, he's unhappy that his older son prefers dancing and plays to sport, he hates that his daughter's best friend is gay. He thinks the purest sense of achievement can be found by something physical as opposed to academics and learning. I know there are people like that, but, it was disappointing that that was all there was to a football coach. And this persists - he keeps these attitudes through most of the book, and even at the end, I felt they weren't all gone. His older son was the one to find his wife hanging in the barn, and there wasn't mention of therapy, even when it becomes obvious that Robbie has issues. I mean, again, I understand that these people exist in real life, but I wouldn't be very sympathetic towards them. I actually liked the lady portrayed as the Jesus freak more - the aunt Joelle, because she at least showed she cared. I didn't get that from Dean.

For all that, the kids were alright, Dean's kids and the girls he ended up coaching. I wanted to read about them. It's just a pity that Dean had such a lion's share of the book.

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### **Steve Williams says**

i love so much about this novel: its sensitive, well-observed depiction of depression and grief; its careful but also incredibly natural structure and plotting; its serious treatment of small towns and small town life; the choice to alternate between the perspectives of high school football coach dean and his daughter, swarthmore freshman stephanie, and its ability to handle the two equally well; gersen's prose, which is always a pleasure to read but never tries too hard to dazzle you.

the novel begins with nicole, long-depressed wife to dean and mother to stephanie, committing suicide. we spend the rest of the novel watching dean and stephanie grieve and try to rebuild their lives. dean struggles to handle the demands of his job; he tries to repair his relationships with his increasingly aloof daughter and sons; he searches for companionship. stephanie, meanwhile, adjusts to college life; she wonders who her friends are, and struggles to balance school with family obligations. this is a novel about ordinary people trying to rebuild their ordinary lives after an extraordinary tragedy.

i interviewed hannah for the lit pub! we talked about this book, among other things.

<http://thelitpub.com/lives-in-the-wak...>

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**Cory Stocking says**

I got this book as a gift from my mom, so felt some compelling force to finish it. It had a good plot but was slow. I didn't feel like it wrapped up well, lots of loose ends. Nice casual read, though.

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**Barbara Moher says**

Liked it, did not love it

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