



Furious George: My Forty Years Surviving NBA Divas, Clueless GMs, and Poor Shot Selection

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The most outspoken and combative coach in NBA history—and one of the most successful, amassing more than 1,175 victories, the sixth best winning record ever—reflects on his life, his career, and his battles on and off the basketball court in this no-holds-barred memoir

A man of deep passion and intensity, George Karl earned his bad boy reputation while playing at the University of North Carolina, a rap that continued through the five years he spent with the San Antonio Spurs—and long after he stopped playing.

Karl's beery nights, fistfights, and barking followed him into a thirty-five-year coaching career. In a game defined by big stakes and bigger egos, rabid fans and an unforgiving media, Karl was hired and fired a dozen times. After leading a team beset by injuries and with no superstar to its best season of all time—an achievement that earned Karl the title NBA Coach of the Year—he was dumped by the Denver Nuggets in 2013. Less than a year and a half later, Karl was at the helm of the Sacramento Kings, snarling and bellowing on the sidelines before being cut loose in May 2016.

Intense, obstinate, and loud, Karl has never backed down from a confrontation, whether with management, officials, or star players, as NBA legends from Allan Iverson to Gary Payton to Carmelo Anthony to Demarcus Cousins can attest. Telling his story, Karl holds nothing back as he speaks out about the game that has defined his life, including the greed, selfishness, and ass-covering he believes are characteristic of the modern NBA player, and the rampant corruption that leads all the way to the office of the NBA commissioner, David Stern. Karl also reveals how he's learned to deal with the personalities, the pressure, and the setbacks with a resilience he acquired from his three bouts with cancer.

Raw, hard-hitting, and brutally honest, *Furious George* is as thrilling, unpredictable, and entertaining as the game that has defined Karl's life.

Furious George: My Forty Years Surviving NBA Divas, Clueless GMs, and Poor Shot Selection Details

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From Reader Review Furious George: My Forty Years Surviving NBA Divas, Clueless GMs, and Poor Shot Selection for online ebook

Arthur Camara says

I give George Karl credit for his candor. He speaks his mind, tells how he thinks pro basketball should be played, and airs his feelings about the stars and GMs he's worked with, good, bad, and indifferent, with emphasis on the bad. I remember his comments about a then young Orlando Magic coach, Glen "Doc" Rivers a former NBA point guard, like Karl, who, unlike Karl, would go on to out coach and defeat Phil Jackson's Lakers in the NBA Finals and win a ring. I've been referring to the author for years as "George Wallace Karl", after Karl channeled his inner Rush Limbaugh, claiming that "Afro American" (yes, Karl was more than 30 yrs behind with his word choice) former players were getting promoted to head coaching positions over long serving, mostly white, assistant coaches who had paid their dues and we're still having to wait for opportunities. I would have liked to have read a response from Karl to Doc Rivers' point about Larry Bird becoming a head coach of the Indiana Pacers, without any coaching experience, and was Karl okay with that because Bird was the celebrated white "hick from French Lick".

But in reading Karl's book, I do get the sense that the George Wallace Karl label is, while fun, a bit unfair. Even though Karl has made tens of millions of dollars coaching and cajoling mostly Black ball players for his entire adult life, Karl is at heart a jock from the rust belt who feels comfortable making pronouncements about how the NBA doesn't have a race problem, not realizing that, as a member of the in crowd and a boss on the floor, Karl might be one of the last to know.

But race is just one of Karl's blind spots, and Karl has more blind spots than he has bald spots. Karl frequently comes across as an insensitive ass, but, in truth, as an equal opportunity insensitive ass, to his son, the players he coaches, the GMs who repeatedly hire him, the media with whom he holds court, and pretty much anyone other than Dean Smith, Michael Jordan, and the other members of his UNC basketball fraternity.

But if you remember Karl's coaching time in Seattle and Milwaukee and Denver, if you watched his regular season successes and frequent first round playoff struggles, and wanted a chance to peak behind the curtain and hear a opiniated coach's side of what went on, this book is fun.

If you want to hear Karl the psychologist explain why poverty and father-lack made some of the more talented Black NBA players less receptive to Karl's furious coaching style, then those paternalistic, off the mark sour-grapes are in here too.

A more honest, reflective realization on Karl's part might have included Doc River's assessment that "George thinks he's more than he is" and that some of Karl's star players did not see Karl as a star coach, and therefore some of those star players declined to give Karl the star treatment and defer to Karl the way Karl obviously expected. Karl is best know for the playoff games his teams lost (1994 upset as a one seed to Dikembe Mutombo's eighth seed Nuggets, upset loss to Nick Van Exel's pre-Shaquille Lakers, the six game Finals loss to the Bulls, ECF seven game loss to Iverson's Sixers, the unexpected and embarrassing World Championships of Basketball loss, in Indy, all the first round losses in Denver) than the few big playoff games that they managed to win. Stars are often resistant to collaborative coaching from leaders without gravitas and a history of success. Karl's style is anything but collaborative, more like brag and drag, but without the playoff success to back it up.

Karl is largely unaware and unconcerned with the disastrously evil effects of the Middle Passage, slavery and the auction block, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Great Migration, redlining and concentrated inner city poverty, crack and Reagan's War on Black people posing as a war on drugs, mass incarceration and private prisons as profit plantations have had and continue to have on the stability of Black families. It's those societal and historical truths, and the shitty choices of some overmatched fathers and mothers, that contribute to the Black fatherlessness Karl briefly pretends to care about.

But it's Karl's long history of post-season frustration and first round failure, and not issues in the Black community, that would be why the talented offensive players that Karl has coached have often declined Karl's demands to shoot less, pass more, and play harder on defense than on offense. Karl's message ("Hey, all that scoring and shooting that got you to the NBA, do less of all the stuff that got you rich and famous and pass more and take charges, trust me") is unpopular to some NBA players, while the messenger is even more so.

Paulo Glez Ogando says

The book clearly pretends to be controversial, but he does it in order to be a bestseller, which it gets. In other words, yes but no. To me, this leaves a bittersweet taste. Karl says a few plain words about this and that (some players or GMs), but he is sometimes a bit like a snake in the grass.

Besides, there is a feeling that everything is a little fake, for so much sh** is too unnatural. It seems everybody is a jerk except him and his family (and Rick Majerus, though). He really seems an angry old man.

But do not be wrong, there is also a lot of truths quite unusual in biographies of this kind, frequently excessively sweetened. It stays in your hand which ones you believe and which ones you take as an exaggeration.

Kevin says

I really enjoyed this book. A lot of it took place during my heyday of being a Phoenix Suns fan so I actually new what was going on.

David says

quick read that doesn't do much to dispel his rep as an angry out-of-touch old guy who has trouble getting along with star players.

North Carolina and its alums, Coach Smith, pass-first point guards, people who play defense with great intensity, beer, and golf = good

AAU ball, gunners, Duke, various GM's who fired him even though it was their fault he has not won a title b/c they didn't give him the players he needed, unfair refs, Phil Jackson, Melo, AI, and [surprisingly, to me] Ray Allen = bad

Gary Payton, Shawn Kemp, and his cancer docs -- a mix

doesn't really give away much in the way of insider knowledge -- he mentions many times that he prefers on offense to emphasize principles of ball movement rather than run set plays, but otherwise little detail.

noting was ever his fault including being the first coach to lose in international play with an American team consisting of NBA players, and repeatedly underperforming his regular season record in the playoffs.

the candor is welcome compared to happy-talk memoirs, but overall comes off as a pretty disagreeable guy who didn't enjoy his mostly successful career all that much.

Writemoves says

Karl is very candid in this book about his coaching, his personal life and the abilities of his players, particularly Carmelo Anthony and Gary Payton. Based on the book, I don't sense that he is an easy coach to play for and I think he acknowledges that. He has gotten to the Conference finals but has not been in the NBA championship finals.

He is a gutty guy. He has survived various illnesses including cancer. He has bounced around coaching in developmental leagues and overseas.

Not the best basketball book that I have read but it is a decent read and some of his comments and criticisms of various NBA stars are spot on.

Chris Jennings says

I was super excited for this book, but it let me down a little bit. George Karl comes off as an angry old man who has lost touch with the modern NBA. I suppose he's ok with that and it was really the point of the book, but it didn't make it enjoyable to read. Personally, I loved the talk of the old CBA's Albany Patroons (I grew up watching them as a kid). Karl does have some solid stories to share, I just wish he surrounded himself with better people to bring this book to life. Some of the best parts of the book came during Karl's time with Seattle (the talk of the Pippen trade was fascinating for me). Ultimately, the book just seemed to ramble from team to team and decade to decade with much of the same nonsense. Karl even seemed to have trouble writing about his (and his son's) battle with cancer. I can understand this being a tough subject to talk about, but I would have loved for him to open up more and give some stories from when he coached while receiving treatment. I thought the biggest disappointment was the abrupt ending with little talk of his time with the Kings. I heard that a lot of those portions were cut at the 11th hour. With the recent Boogie Cousins trade, it could have given another glimpse into the futility of Sacramento's team. Overall, hardcore NBA fans will still enjoy this book (as I did to some extent) but Karl blew his opportunity to become a more well-known cultural icon with this book.

David says

I speculate that George Karl and ghostwriter Curt Sampson planned to write this book in two stages. First Stage: Karl and Sampson would make a detailed outline of Karl's career and opinions. Second Stage: Karl and Sampson would flesh out the outline with Karl's best anecdotes from 40 years in basketball. But then a strange thing appears to have happened. Upon completing the First Stage, Karl and Sampson realized that they had produced enough material to call the result a "book," and they decided that they were done. Very disappointing.

Thomas Anstett says

From a basketball standpoint, the book is five-stars. This rating emerges from my own background as coach of hoop for 42 years (all high school): the stories, wit, and wisdom communicated throughout the book are pearls for any basketball coach. There is a sharp contrast between Karl's "old-school" approach and the approach in today's NBA-AAU dominated basketball atmosphere. Reading the book provides an understanding of the ways "winning" in today's world is directed by the almighty dollar, selfish offenses, and silly decisions by people who should know better.

Worth the time. Easy reading. Lots of chuckles. Absorbing journey of tension, winning, losing, life itself.

Josh Url says

It is always interesting to get a peek behind the curtain in this industry and this book does provide a perspective on several events that I had not heard before. It does come across a bit to me as Coach Karl's way to openly discuss how much some of his colleagues and players were wrong or bad. while there is some quality self reflection to be found in this book it is mostly found in the later parts centered around his cancer and how it shifted his perspective on his own health. there is very little self reflection in regards to the events in his career noted in the book. this came off to me as an inability to perceive or accept his own errors and faults during his successful but pretty contentious career in basketball.

overall, I am glad I read this book and enjoyed the behind the scenes perspective even if left a bitter aftertaste.

Matt says

This was a great read. I was a little wary because of some bad press from a couple of former players, but I thought this was a fun and engaging read.

Also, right off, Karl acknowledges who he is, his style, and why that doesn't always mesh with his players. So when he critiques some of his players, it didn't seem personal.

His coaching career was a pretty fascinating journey, and he was willing to go back to the CBA, even after proving he could coach in the NBA.

Karl is not a perfect person, or a perfect coach, but his comes across as very relatable.

This book is interesting not because it is some sort of exposé, but because he tells it like it is from his perspective.

Paul Miller says

You gotta give the NBA a lot of credit for building a vibrant, worldwide sports business built exclusively around the personalities and not the core product itself. Playoff basketball is great but the regular season is unwatchable and of no interest to anyone except the gamblers and the teams tanking to improve draft position. If like me you enjoy the personalities - immature, spoiled, lazy, but immensely athletically talented athletes - you'll enjoy this book. George Karl pulls no punches - for instance, he explains the corruption of AAU basketball, the shoe companies, and college basketball. The best passage of the book is when he describes Carmelo Anthony. If that thought makes you snicker, you'll enjoy this book.

Benoit Lelièvre says

This was as slanderous as advertised. George Karl just sh*ts on everyone he's ever coached on worked with except maybe for Rick Majerus for 256 pages. It gets particularly bad in the Denver Nuggets chapters where the likes of Carmelo Anthony, Kenyon Martin and J.R Smith can't seem to do anything right. I mean, Jesus. Karl coached that team for eight years. SOMETHING must've went right somewhere along the way.

I don't know what I was expecting, but for a coach as universally reviled as Karl, FURIOUS GEORGE was pretty much the pity party I expected it to be. Everybody's a jerk except him and he cannot even seem to mount a good argument as for why he isn't. Don't get me wrong, this was entertaining and I got a kick from hearing George Karl reminiscing about his Seattle and Milwaukee teams, but that guy knows no shame whatsoever. It's hard to take him seriously after reading this. Even if he won over 1,000 NBA games. This book does a poor job at explaining how he convinced anyone to play for him.

Judd Vance says

I never heard of George Karl until the 1991-92 season. I remember the Sonics hovering at .500 at mid-season wondering why such a team wasn't performing better. They had Benoit Benjamin, Michael Cage, Shawn Kemp, Derrick McKee, Gary Payton, Eddie Johnson, Rickey Pierce, and Nate McMillan. The Sonics fire K.C. Jones hire a coach named George Karl from the Spanish League. Karl takes them to 27-15 and that caught my eye. The Sonics start playing to their talent level. Although not my team, I really wanted a Seattle-New York 1994 finals and sadly that didn't happen. So what did happen? And what happened with the Scottie Pippen/Shawn Kemp almost trade? What might have been.

I kept my eye on Karl a little bit through the years. I saw he turned around Milwaukee and heard he was at Denver, but I had lost interest in the NBA by this point. I never knew Karl had cancer - which is how far out of it I was.

I read Karl's other book ("This game's the best") as well as his ghost writer (Kurt Sampson) book on the 1994 Sonics.

But I wanted an insider's take on those Sonics teams and how he went from Spain to successful NBA career.

I don't mind his outspokenness -- it makes for more interesting reading.

This was a must-buy/must-read. I heard Kenyon Martin wasn't happy, but who cares? He's an NBA bust. I never had a high opinion of Carmelo Anthony as well. Right after I read this book, I think Karl's point about JR Smith was proven right in Game 1 of the 2018 Finals.

Anyway, I found it an interesting read. I was surprised to learn Karl had a low opinion of Detlef Schrempf, Ricky Pierce, and especially Ray Allen.

Karl has his share of haters for sure. I tend to fall on the side that says the guy can coach. No coincidence that he turned around Seattle immediately where Jones could not. No surprise he could get Milwaukee and Denver to high levels. He didn't win a title, but sometimes, you don't get to coach the MJ's and Shaqs. Entertaining read.

Tom Shaffer says

I am not a big fan of George Karl, but I am a big fan of this book. I've never really thought of him as a great coach, and nothing in this has changed my mind. I do like, however, how he appears to speak his mind without caring who's feelings it may hurt. One of the things I cannot stand about coaches on TV or writing books or really in any public forum, is that they're still dying to get back into an NBA coaching job, and therefore will not say anything to draw any sort of negative attention to themselves, even if it's the truth. Karl doesn't do that at all.

In fact, the only people he really talks bad about without also explaining how he's become close with them over time, are the people that, as a fan, you pretty much felt the same way about anyway.

I really enjoyed when he talked about his days in Seattle coaching Gary Payton (one of my favorite players), and how Shawn Kemp was (in his opinion) the best player on that team and the dynamic between the two and George himself.

If you like basketball and have any interest in its history, I would pick this up. However, I didn't seem to feel the same way as a lot of other reviewers about the level of bashing, and actually thought the title and the media attention made it a bit overblown and I was even a bit disappointed in the lack of behind the scenes tomfoolery, if you will.

Kevin Comfort says

Enjoyable...a little long winded in parts. George's voice really comes through and you get a sense of what George is like and what he expects. Keep chasing that championship George. Bring back the Sonics! Also loved reading about the past with the Sonics.
