



You Cannot Be Serious

By John McEnroe, James Kaplan

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John McEnroe was just an eighteen-year-old amateur from Queens when he stunned the tennis world by making it to the Wimbledon semifinals in 1977. He turned pro the following year after winning the NCAA singles title; three years later, he was ranked number one in the world. McEnroe dominated tennis in the eighties, winning three Wimbledon and four U.S. Open titles. His 1980 Wimbledon final match with Bjorn Borg is considered by many tennis experts to be the best match ever.

You Cannot Be Serious is McEnroe at his most personal, a no-holds-barred examination of contemporary tennis, his championship seasons, his cantankerous on-court behavior, his marriage to Tatum O'Neal, his current roles as a devoted father, husband to pop star Patty Smyth, senior tennis tour player, and controversial television commentator, and much more.

Funny, biting, close to the bone, this is exactly the book you'd expect-and want-from one of the most colorful figures of our time.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In his new role as TV commentator (and in his short-lived run as Davis Cup captain) McEnroe has tried to make the unlikely switch from tennis enfant terrible to tennis elder statesman. Judging by the welcome he has received from both the cognoscenti and the American public, it has been a largely successful transition. This memoir of growing up (or not growing up) on the men's tour tracks the same course. Unfortunately, when shifted to the page, the reinvention produces a much more muddled result. All of the career highlights and lowlights are here his idolization of Borg, his seminal matches with Connors and at Davis Cup, his clashes with the British press at Wimbledon, his romantic perambulations. But while appealingly self-aware ("For me, the relief of not losing has always been just as strong as, if not stronger than, the joy of winning") and consistently honorable, the effort feels a little dull. McEnroe's sincere pronouncements lack the *cojones* that might have made the book entertaining, and yet for all his openness, he engages in too much self-justification to seem truly vulnerable or poignant. The book grew out of a profile Kaplan wrote for the *New Yorker* two summers ago. That piece managed to present McEnroe as affable without diluting what is essentially brash and true about the star, and one wishes a little more of that boldness would have crept in here. For McEnroe, the persona hinted at in public remains more interesting and complicated than the person he gives us in this book. While the champion would no doubt argue, it appears that he has hit this one a little wide.

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From Library Journal

McEnroe, the feisty New Yorker whose brilliant serve-and-volley style of play was at times overshadowed by his on-court antics, captured 17 Grand Slam championships during a 15-year "wild ride" on the professional tennis tour. Now, he and journalist Kaplan take a candid look back at this colorful career. Smashing racquets and screaming tirades against linesmen and umpires only cemented McEnroe's role as the explosive bad boy of tennis. Yet the Hall of Famer shows surprising insight here. He explores why matches were constant battles against "the other guy and myself," admitting that the relief of not failing was at least as strong as the joy of winning. McEnroe fully details his most significant triumphs and losses (e.g., the 1984 French Open final, in which he held a two-sets-to-one lead over nemesis Ivan Lendl, and the classic Wimbledon five-set defeat by Bjorn Borg). His three Wimbledon and four U.S. Open singles titles were special, but perhaps his proudest achievement was the five Davis Cups he helped to secure at a time when other top players were more interested in the money to be made in tournaments and exhibitions. McEnroe also writes openly about his turbulent former marriage to actress Tatum O'Neal, and current status as father to six and husband to pop star Patty Smyth. Readers will be happy to learn that his anger-management counseling seems to help him defuse "certain situations" effectively. Recommended for sports and general collections.

- Howard Katz, New York

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From [Booklist](#)

The years from the late 1970s through the early 1990s made up a golden era in professional tennis. Connors, Borg, and Lendl were all household names during the period, but nobody attracted attention the way John McEnroe did, for both his on-court triumphs and his reputation as the sport's enfant terrible. His profane outbursts, usually directed at hapless linesmen and umpires, became legendary. (The title of this autobiography derives from his most famous invective.) Writing with a good-humored maturity borne of age and experience, McEnroe recounts his edgy years as a star, wincing a bit at the youthful excesses and the

self-important posturing. His recollections fall into three categories: accounts of key matches, life as a jet-setting celebrity, and reflections on the emotional roller coaster that has been his personal life (including his much-chronicled marriage to and divorce from actress Tatum O'Neal). Tennis fans will revel in the match accounts; McEnroe, a true student of the game, is an excellent television tennis commentator, and his analyses make fascinating reading. The jet-set anecdotes read well, too, thanks to the engaging, self-deprecating humor the author brings to his tales of partying with the rich and famous. As charismatic as ever, McEnroe is still a celebrity--game-show hosting is now part of his repertoire--and his book is sure to draw a crowd. *Wes Lukowsky*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Wormley:

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