



# **We Own This Game: A Season in the Adult World of Youth Football**

*Robert Andrew Powell*

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Although its participants are still in grade school, Pop Warner football is serious business in Miami, where local teams routinely advance to the national championships. Games draw thousands of fans; recruiters vie for nascent talent; drug dealers and rap stars bankroll teams; and the stakes are so high that games sometimes end in gunshots. In Miami's poorest neighborhood, troubled parents dream of NFL stardom for children who long only for a week in Disney World at the Pop Warner Super Bowl. In 2001, award-winning journalist Robert Andrew Powell spent a year following two young teams through roller-coaster seasons. The Liberty City Warriors, former national champs, will suffer their first-ever losing season. The inner-city kids of the Palmetto Raiders, undefeated for two straight years, will be rewarded for good play with limo rides and steak dinners. But their flamboyant coach (the "Darth Vader of youth football") will face defeat in a down-to-the-wire play-off game. We Own This Game is an inside-the-huddle look into a world of innocence and corruption, where every kickoff bares political, social, and racial implications. It is an unforgettable drama that shows us just what it means to win and to lose in America.

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