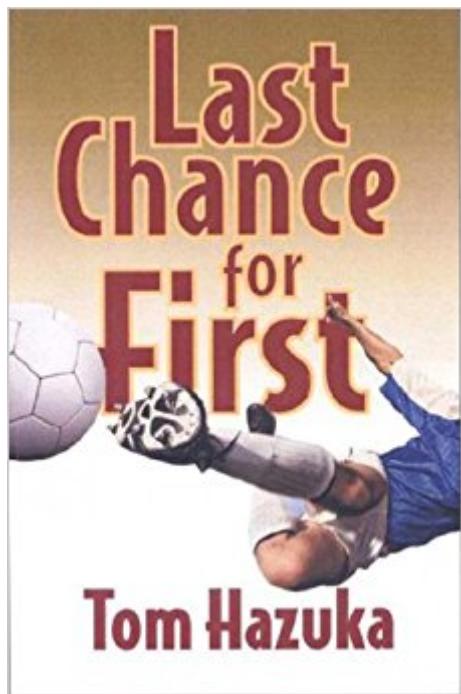


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# Last Chance For First



## **Synopsis**

Robby doesn't smile so much when Jim, his best friend and co-captain of the team, is suspended from the team for drinking, the sadistic coach finally crosses the line in practice, and the girl he's interested in turns out to be eccentric and unpredictable, with a bad secret. And Robby's got to lead his team to the State championships to win a soccer scholarship for collegeAn exciting, realistic coming of age novel of a smart star athlete surviving in high school.

## **Book Information**

Age Range: 12 and up

Lexile Measure: NC730L (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,203,882 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports > Soccer #486 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Peer Pressure #8318 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School

## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 8 Up•Robby Fielder is a varsity soccer cocaptain and decent student, but his parents continue to compare him to his football-star older brother and find him lacking. When he and his best friend share a few beers, it doesn't seem like a big deal, but then Jim continues drinking and totals his car, causing his parents to pull him from the team, where his goalie skills are sorely missed. Meanwhile, Robby is attracted to Pet, whose bleached hair, nose ring, and outspokenness make her an object of derision among their classmates. She opens up to him, revealing a dark secret about her past, and he admires her honesty and longs to keep her trust. Robby's teammates begin to question his commitment to the squad, and, indeed, as his relationship with Pet develops, it seems that the team's cohesiveness unravels. Robby is forced to make decisions about where his loyalty really lies: putting the team first will help him to realize his dream of a soccer scholarship, but

at what price? Hazuka's first young adult novel realistically depicts one teen's struggle to prepare for the future without compromising the present. There are enough plot twists to keep readers guessing, and soccer fans will appreciate the author's obvious love of the game. While adult figures are fairly two dimensional—the wise teacher, the win-at-all-costs coach—the dialogue and interactions among the teens are spot-on. A solid choice where Chris Crutcher and Mike Lupica have a strong following. —Kim Dare, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

High-school-junior Robby Fielder is constantly reminded by his parents that he doesn't measure up to his older, football-star brother. Robby's sport, much to his dad's displeasure, is soccer. Dad is also displeased by Robby's interest in Pet, the new girl at school. Over a period of several weeks, Robby's teammate is in an alcohol-induced car accident, and his coach resigns after his abusive methods are exposed by a video footage on the news. Eventually, Robby finds that Pet taped the coach, he leads his team back to victory, and he becomes Pet's boyfriend. Stock characters abound: sadistic coach; quirky, nonconformist girl; understanding English teacher; and a confused jock at the center of it all. What sets this apart, however, is the sometimes coarse but always realistic portrait of high-school life. Readers will find plenty that is familiar here, and they will appreciate the somewhat meandering plot that doesn't tie up all the loose ends. Grades 8-11. --Todd Morning

"If the final score of a game is the most important part of a story, it's not much of a story. That score only matters insofar as it affects characters—why they care what the score is," says Robby's creative writing teacher. Robby is in his junior year of high school and believes his future depends on that final score. In Tom Hazuka's novel *LAST CHANCE FOR FIRST*, it appears on the surface that Robby's having the perfect high school experience: he's a good student with a great soccer career ahead of him. However, he's got to remain headstrong with some tough challenges. His soccer coach is overpowering and takes things too far at practice. One of his teammates makes a wrong choice one night and his actions affect the team's chance for the championship. His girlfriend has some secrets that she needs to reveal, and his parents constantly compare him to his older brother, who can do no wrong. Robby has to step up and play the hardest game he's ever played before: just making it through this year. He learns what he really cares about and that the final score isn't what truly matters. This was a good first novel by Tom Hazuka. He creates realistic scenes that can happen in any high school. I look forward to his future books. Reviewed by: hoopsieLV

Hazuka writes an entertaining contemporary fiction novel that is right on target when depicting a sixteen year old high school athlete, Robbie, who struggles with the everyday challenges of being a "jock", dating an outspoken yet genuine girl, meeting the high expectations of his parents, and finding his own moral ground. His writing is easy to read and allows the reader to walk in Robbie's footsteps. The characters are well developed, the plot and subplots are engaging, and the short chapters make it a fine example of young adult literature. A definite recommendation for young adults who will easily relate to the storyline.

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