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# Open Ice



## Synopsis

NICKY TAG! NICKY TAG! All his life, crowds have been cheering for Nick Taglio. He's been skating since he could walk, scoring goals since he picked up a hockey stick. He's only a sophomore but he rules the ice, because Nicky Taglio is a fighter. Which means you have to take some hits; concussions come with the territory. When he gets another head injury, his doctor, his parents, and his coach tell him he can never play again. Too dangerous, they say. He can't risk his future. But they don't understand that without hockey, Nick has no future. It's not a game, it's his life. And nobody can stop him from playing. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Mass Market Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Laurel Leaf (November 13, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553494449

ISBN-13: 978-0553494440

Product Dimensions: 3.2 x 0.8 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,939,788 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Teens >

Literature & Fiction > Sports > Hockey #24399 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues

## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up Hockey is more than Nick's favorite sport; it has become the very framework of his life. His friends are all players, his hot new girlfriend's a huge fan, and his hopes for college hang on securing an athletic scholarship. So when his physician, coach, and family all agree, following his fourth concussion, that the 16-year-old star should stop playing the game, it means major upheaval in his life. Hughes's attention to detail in terms of both head injuries and the sport adds lots of pith and interest to this story, and her accurate portrayal of middle-class teen life (which includes sex, obscenities, and pot smoking) should keep reluctant readers turning pages. The central question shifts from the prospect of whether Nick can return to the rink to the more important matter of whether he can regain control of his roiling emotions. Jeffrey Hastings, Highlander Way Middle School, Howell, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division

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\*Starred Review\* Gr. 9--12. "In the dream, there's always open ice," but in real life, high-school hockey player Nick Taglio has a knack for getting blindsided, and he has the concussions to prove it. His latest bell-ringer has left him with a bad case of post-concussion syndrome, prompting his doctor to forbid him from playing hockey, possibly forever. It only gets worse, as Nick lapses into emotional free-fall, blowing off school, fighting with his parents, getting dumped by his girlfriend (who is only interested in healthy hockey stars), and even endangering his baby brother. Yes, this sounds like readers of Hughes' first YA novel are in danger themselves--of getting their bells rung by coming-of-age overload--but every time we think we see an oppressive author's message on the horizon, Hughes feints left and skates right, confounding our expectations with a subtle twist of character that draws us deeper into the story. Nick does plenty of soul-searching, but it happens around the edges of his bitter, knifing wit. His relationships with his friends and family, too, are always multidimensional, and while there is plenty of sex in the story, it proves as confusing for Nick and his peers as it does exhilarating. Best of all, though, is the hockey: sure, the open ice thing is a metaphor--the virus of sports novels--but thankfully, it never overwhelms the taut physicality of the game itself. By being true to the sport, Hughes unlocks the truth in her characters. Bill OttCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I just finished reading *Open Ice*, and I enjoyed reading it. Nick was a very relatable character, experiencing something that could happen to anyone- the loss of a favorite sport because of a serious injury. Nick dealt with the news that he had to stop playing hockey in a way that I think anyone who was very passionate about a sport would- he was angry, upset, confused, and depressed. For the most part I think that the book was well written. There is a scene near the beginning of the book where Nick is instant messaging his friends and talking on the phone with others, and it was difficult to follow who exactly he was talking to and what they were saying to each other. I also did not like Devin's character- in fact, I couldn't stand her. She was very selfish, and I did not like the way that she treated Nick after his injury. Other than those things, I enjoyed the book. Again, I thought Nick's character and his experiences were very relatable. I think that this book would be a good read for young athletes who are in situations similar to the one that Nick was in.

ge. No matter how dangerous hockey is and how many concussions Nick receives, he continues to play. Between hockey and his girlfriend, Nick's life is good. Then, Nick receives another concussion, his fourth one in fact by keeping his head down, his number one habit. This concussion is not like the others, and Nick may never play hockey again. If Nick loses hockey, his life, then what else is left for him? When I began reading *Open Ice*, I was a bit apprehensive because I had heard few things about it. Basically, all I knew was that the book was a coming-of-age novel about hockey. I like coming-of-age and hockey, so I figured I would give it a way. Luckily, I thought *Open Ice* was a good novel. Pat Hughes did a great job characterizing Nick. He was an incredibly realistic character, and I enjoyed the way Hughes portrayed him after his concussion. That's not to say I agreed with his actions, but his actions seemed like the way many guys would have reacted to being told to say goodbye to their favorite sport. Hughes also did a great job portraying Nick's parents. When dealt with Nick's situation, they acted in a responsible manner, without seeming cheesy. The only character I had a complaint about was Devin, Nick's girlfriend. She's a stereotypical girl who only wants to date a star hockey player, and Nick is completely smitten (in the beginning at least). I think Hughes could have developed Devin more, while still keeping her general persona. Devin was just so blaaah, and aside from looks, I could not see any reason Nick dated her. At times, I also thought Hughes tried to push to appealing to teens too much. The smoking pot and Daves Matthews Band seemed forced at times. Overall, however, *Open Ice* is a wonderful portrayal of dealing with life after a sport injury. I would recommend *Open Ice* to anyone looking for a coming-of-age that reveals the hardships of leaving a favorite sport.

Fast-paced literary skater Pat Hughes showed that she is comfortable on the ice of writing and definitely a senior member of the varsity team in her latest book *Open Ice*. She deftly negotiates the delicate edge-of-the-blade teenage dialogue while skating backwards and making it look easy. This sports reader's attention was glued to every page-turning play of her game even ruining his planned Sunday afternoon nap which was replaced by reading the last 160 pages of *Open Ice*.>>I loved this book. Hughes placed me directly in the midst of these people and their thoughts. I feel like I know them and, the ultimate sign of great writing, I wonder what they are doing now that I've finished reading the book. Not only does Hughes think like a teenager but, as she's done in her previous books *Guerrilla Season* and *Breaker Boys*, she comes across like an authentic teenage guy! This book felt like it was told to me by Nick himself, a little wiser, more mature, but definitely by the guy who lived the experience.>>And then the layers...When Devin was distancing herself from Nick and>urging him to pressure his parents to play again I thought I was SO smart that I could see right

through her motives. I had her pegged for what she was. Then I smiled as it occurred to me that I get NO credit for my revelation. Hughes had me right where she wanted me. Seeing only what she wanted me to see. But then at the after-game party when the details about her and Ramsey came out I stopped hating her and felt bad for her instead. Her intentions were not as clear as I had been ready for them to be earlier in the book. Hughes didn't take the easy literary route and stop at Devin being a hockey groupie. She had deeper problems and insecurities. I rode the roller coaster that Hughes laid out for me and what a great ride it was!>Every family of a traumatic brain injury patient should read this book. My heart skipped a beat when Nick accidentally sent the Instant Message to the wrong person knowing that he would never have done that prior to the concussion, and knowing that it was the tip of the iceberg of his problems. As he became more contentious and more aggressive and impulsive I was scared for the fallout. And sure enough it came. The standoff between Nick and his Dad was stressful. Working around rehab I have seen the disintegration of many marriages and families because the TBI patient "isn't who he used to be". This book has the power to let others have a peek inside the mind of a person suffering from post-concussive syndrome. Hughes is a talented, authentic and entertaining writer. With this one she's also done a great service to the community of families living with mild brain injury patients.

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