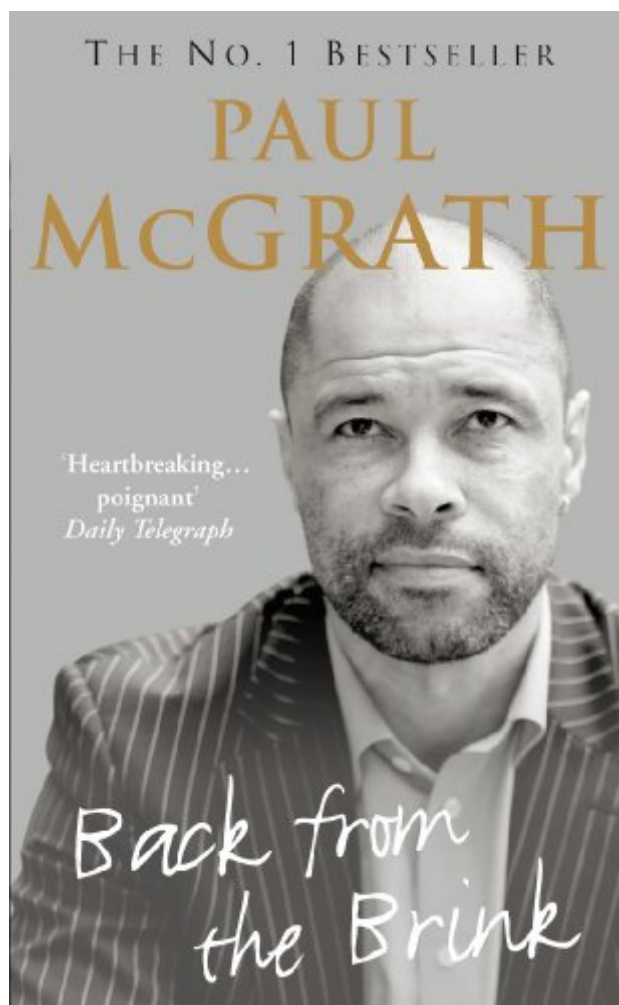


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Back From The Brink: The Autobiography



Synopsis

Paul McGrath is Ireland's best loved sportsman and also its least understood. An iconic football presence during a professional career stretching over 14 years, he played for his country in the European Championship finals of 1988 and the World Cup finals of 1990 and 1994. But, behind the implied glamour of life in the employ of great English clubs like Manchester United and Aston Villa, McGrath wrestled with a range of destructive emotions that made his success in the game little short of miraculous. That story has until now never been told. It is a story that runs from a hard, hidden childhood spent in Dublin's orphanages all the way to the pain of two marriage break-ups and the struggle to cope with life after football. Quite apart from his all too public struggle with alcoholism, the story runs through the surreal highs and calamitous lows of a life lived habitually on the edge of chaos. It is not just a football story. It is an extraordinary human story that is certain to surprise with its candour. Here, for the first time, read about the father he never met; the mother whose love never died; the routine loneliness and ritual bullying endured by a black kid growing up behind closed doors in 1960s Dublin; the emotional breakdown suffered on leaving that institution; the recovery that - remarkably - brought him all the way to Old Trafford; the rollercoaster ride that followed. Here, the guilt, fear, self-loathing are all laid bare in a story fired with hope and determination for the future. It may well be the most candid sports book ever written.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I don't follow football and was too young when Paul was plying his trade but this story connects so well with all of us I feel. As a reader I want to know what makes successful people tick but at the same time it's intriguing to know why it is they play with fire, get burnt but can't end the yo yo cycle. Paul's more the man for sharing his warts and all account. A thoroughly good read!

Well-written insight into the tortuous life of a football legend. Such a sad upbringing brought to life, it's amazing how far he went with his dodgy knees and alcoholism. What a player!

Excellent, honest memoir of an addict's painful journey. A unique view of his life, both from inside and outside.

This book can be such good reading for a very wide variety of people. When I say this, I mean it. Is one an alcoholic? Read it. Are you a big fan of soccer? Read it. Are you interested in Ireland? Surely, this should be read as well. Yes, and I could go on. The first half of the book is especially quite a heartening read, Paul was the son of a Nigerian male and an Irish woman, however, Paul came to find himself in institutions, sort of being an orphan though he kept tabs with his Mother and at times, did seem to live with his family. There are really warm stories here, that of his sister especially. If one suffers from alcoholism, I don't know if there has ever been a better account on the destructive nature of the disease though I haven't read many other like accounts. He talks about blackouts, waking up and not knowing how he got somewhere and even accidents he experienced while driving, fortunately, none of them having grave consequences. McGrath even passed out on streets on occasion. Although at times, some of the information on the Irish National Soccer Team that Paul played for could be much more expanded upon, there's enough and he talks about the coach of the Irish Team, Jack Charlton, Gaffer for a decade (among other managers). Jack would set a sentry outside of McGrath's door at night when the Irish were off playing a game somewhere, to keep Paul from going on a bender. There is also good information on other figures in Paul's life such as Sir Alex Ferguson, long time successful coach of Manchester United, Peter Taylor, who coached McGrath at Aston Villa and other accounts of major figures who knew Paul. It's amazing that though Paul was on the wagon some, at other times, the drink dominated him but he was such

a good player, some teams put up with the risks of an alcoholic even when it came down to the occasions where McGrath went absolutely missing during the time a big game might be played. I've long had some videos of the Ireland National Team games with Paul in it, in USA 1994, I can turn on one of the videos and McGrath is talked about, he was such a phenomenally gifted player. I really wanted to bow out of writing a review on this book but I feel compelled to though it is hard to describe. Good read for around St. Patrick's day, I hope the best for Macca. McGrath really joins a legion of sports stars like George Best and others, who had problem with the drink. I will seek to scan the cover of my edition of this book, it is a picture likely from the same photo session but Paul has a bit of a warm grin on his face. In the cover of the one shown on the page, it is a bit of a long face.

Great book. A good insight into football during the early 90s

Incredible to think that he achieved so much given his upbringing. Still life is hard. Great read

Interesting, but sad to see this in such a wonderful defender

Brilliant read, we love you Macca (5) UTV

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