

The Gallaudet women's basketball team has just defeated the number one ranked team in the country, the College of New Jersey. A reporter, not wanting to be insensitive, delicately broaches the obvious question: "How can you play so well despite your hearing impairment?" Nanette Virnig, a forward for Gallaudet, puts him at ease. "We're not hearing impaired," she says. "We're deaf." Winning Sounds Like This is the remarkable story of the nation's most unique and inspiring women's basketball team and its 1999-2000 season. It is a touching chronicle of players who don't hear buzzers or cheers, a coach who has never used a whistle, and a university that is a mecca for deaf culture throughout the world. Author Wayne Coffey offers an intimate and unsparing look at the players' lives on and off the court, their struggles to overcome the mistreatment and misconceptions of the hearing world, and their deeply rooted connection to one another. Interwoven with an overview of the shameful history of education for the deaf, Coffey explores the players' hopes and dreams and introduces us to such unforgettable people as Ronda Jo Miller, a Minnesota farm girl who is the most decorated athlete in school history; Touria Ouahid, a point guard from Morocco who had to overcome the fierce objections of her Muslim culture to pursue basketball and her education; and their relentlessly dedicated coach, Kitty Baldrige, who has led the Gallaudet women's team for nearly twenty-five years. On the bench for every game, on the bus for every trip, even living in the dorms and attending classes, Coffey presents sensitively crafted portraits of ten remarkable women who adamantly reject the notion that they are disabled in any way. Their goal in life is not to be able to hear, but simply to be accepted and respected. Nearly fifteen years ago, I. King Jordan, Gallaudet's president and a towering figure in contemporary deaf history, issued a famous quote: "Deaf people can do everything but hear." Much more than just a basketball story, Winning Sounds Like This is a celebration of community, of perseverance, and of young women who live out King Jordan's words every day of their lives.

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