

GET YOUR SPORTS FICTION IN THE MAG!

WORD PLAY

ERIK SMETANA FELT GAMES WEREN'T GETTING THEIR DUE. The founding editor of *Stymie*, a lit journal with eyes for athletics alone (stymiemag.com), noticed most mags ran sports fiction only in specially themed issues. So he created one in which sports are always on the menu. "Sports stories often feel like play-by-play; they're too centered on the game," he says. "With us, sports play a role, but they fade into the background and help the story achieve something greater." Whet your appetite with excerpts from the most recent *Stymie*, then learn how the first sports fiction published in the pages of our mag could be yours.

STEELERS COUNTRY

BY LAURIE KOOZER

Oh God. Everything hurt. Every. Single. Thing. She shut her eyes again, this time rubbing her temples. Her stomach felt so full that she could barely swallow but when she did, the inside of her mouth tasted like beer and kielbasa. Megan grimaced, looking straight up at a low white ceiling. She hated kielbasa. Absolutely hated it. Taking a deep breath, she looked around again, searching for anything that might give her a clue about where she was and who the heck was curled up next to her. Everything in the room was brown—velour seats along rectangular windows, dark paneling, and brown carpet. Just beside the narrow screen door, two steps led into a small space that looked like a kitchen. On the counter, there was a pile of black and gold plastic leis, a half-eaten black and gold cupcake, a couple of cans of Iron City Light, some beer koozies and a pair of tongs. Above it all, a black and gold paper banner that had once boasted "You're in Steelers Country" was ripped in half, the two sides swinging just above the beer cans on the counter. The Steelers game. Yes, that was it. The Steelers game.



THE WOMAN WHO SKIED ON THE ROOFTOPS OF HOUSES: A FABLE

BY BEN LOORY

The woman finally stops. She looks up at the rooftops. She looks up at all the rooftops in the town. She remembers how it once was, and her eyes fill with tears, and then the tears come rolling down. And then she hears a sound, and another, and another. The sound of many doors being opened. When the woman's husband gets home from work, he stands in the street, speechless. There is his wife—still in her wheelchair—up there flying through the air. She's leaping from roof to roof to roof, with the townspeople cheering her on—and they're catching, lifting, pushing, pulling, tossing her on and on. Everyone is sweating under the tropical sun, and laughing and smiling and carrying on. The man wants to stop it, to holler out No! But instead he just stands on the lawn. His wife is smiling. The man can't believe it. He hasn't seen her smile in so long. I never thought it would happen, he thinks. It's even better than snow.

SMALLER IN PERSON BY CYNTHIA HAWKINS

And as we stare, engrossed, content, pressed together, side by side, the only time this will happen for the rest of the day at the Baseball Hall of Fame because I don't like baseball, not since the little slow-pitch softball incident, not unless it's on film where it's safe and condensed and any humiliation belongs to someone else. I see a familiar reflected face hovering above the reflection of my own. Something about the thin, naturally downturned mouth and slightly jutting chin, the angle of the nose, the shag of dishwater blond hair over the brow—the guy behind me, as I discreetly study him in the glass, looks just like Jeff Daniels. I nudge Joe with my elbow and nod to the reflection, but he thinks I'm looking at Redford's jersey beyond the reflection. Then the man behind me who looks just like Jeff Daniels says something to the woman next to him in Jeff Daniels' voice—a little plaintive, a little rasped at the end of the sentence, resonating at the pitch of a whine but not whining. "Hmm." I loop my arm around Joe's and squeeze as we all shuffle, en masse, toward the next group of items. "I wonder where, you know, that thing ... with the thing ... is ... from that thing, you know." I peer around as I speak, pretending to look for some thing with the thing, while really trying to get a good look at the guy behind me ... who is most definitely Jeff Daniels. And tall. Just as tall and lumbering as you'd think he would be from any of his films. It's an exact match, movie and reality. It's better than a Geena Davis uniform.

READY TO SPIN YOUR OWN SPORTY YARN? **THE MAG** AND **STYMIE** ARE CLEARING SPACE FOR YOUR SPORTS SHORTS. SEE BELOW FOR DETAILS.

ESPN The Magazine & Stymie Magazine Sports Fiction Contest

Official Rules
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Official Rules for the ESPN The Magazine & Stymie Magazine Sports Fiction Contest (the "Contest") sponsored by ESPN The Magazine and Stymie Magazine ("Sponsors").
1. ELIGIBILITY: Open only to legal residents of the United States, 18 years of age or older as of entry date. All employees of Sponsors, their parent company, affiliates, franchisees and subsidiaries, and the immediate families and household members of each, are not eligible to enter or win.
2. ENTRY: To enter the Contest, you may either (i) mail in your original, previously unpublished, piece of sports fiction (the "Story") to ESPN The Magazine & Stymie Magazine Sports Fiction Contest, c/o ESPN The Magazine, 19 East 34th St., New York, NY 10016, or (ii) place your Story in the body of an e-mail (i.e., NO ATTACHMENTS) to FictionContest@ESPNTheMag.com. Include your

name, home address, e-mail address and phone number along with your Story. For purposes of notifying the winner, entries that do not include complete contact details will not be considered. Stories must not exceed 3,000 words. Entries must be received or postmarked by June 1, 2010, to be eligible to win. Sponsors may use your Story online, in print, on television or in any other forms of media, in connection with the Contest. Your submission may be cut, edited and/or added to for any reason and in any manner which Sponsors determine. Stories will not be returned. You are not guaranteed to receive any further consideration of any kind for your Story and any credit you receive in connection with the use of your Story shall be at the Sponsors' sole discretion.
3. JUDGING: Entries will be judged by the editors of ESPN The Magazine and Stymie Magazine. The decision of the judges is final. Winner will be notified on or about July 15, 2010.
4. PRIZE: The author of the winning Story will have the opportunity to be published in a future issue of ESPN The Magazine. Winner will be notified by mail, e-mail or phone. Runners-up may be eligible for publication in Stymie Magazine.

5. REPRESENTATIONS: You represent and warrant that (i) your entire Story is an original work by you and you have not copied or used other works or other third party materials in your Story; (ii) your Story will not infringe or violate any rights of any person or entity including, without limitation, any copyright, trademark, patent, privacy or publicity, or contractual rights, or constitute idea misappropriation; (iii) your submission has never been previously published.
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