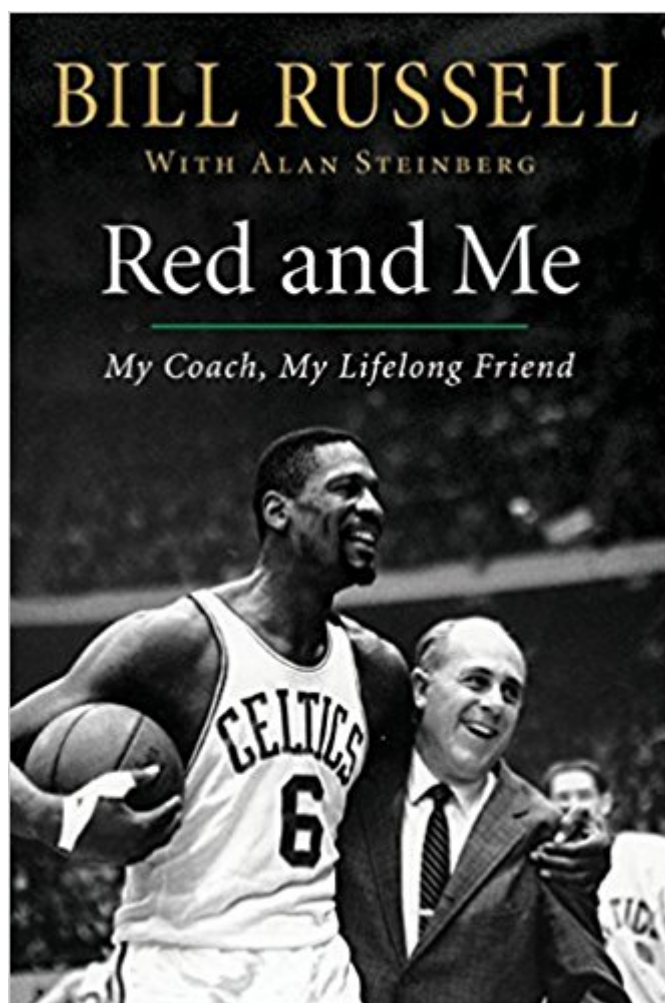


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# Red And Me: My Coach, My Lifelong Friend



## Synopsis

“Bill Russell was the greatest team basketball player ever.” [He] has produced a moving tribute to his friend and, in a larger sense, to friendship. •Booklist In Red and Me, Boston Celtics basketball legend Bill Russell pays homage to his mentor and coach, the inimitable Red Auerbach. A poignant remembrance of a life-altering relationship in the tradition of Big Russ and Me and Tuesdays With Morrie, Red and Me tells an unforgettable story of one unlikely and enduring friendship set against the backdrop of the greatest basketball dynasty in NBA history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First, let’s get the basketball credentials out of the way. Russell was the greatest team basketball player ever; his Boston Celtics won championships in 11 of his 13 years. Arnold Jacob “Red” Auerbach was the Celtics coach for the first 10 years of Russell’s career and later, as the general manager, assembled five more championship teams after Russell retired. Russell retraces the path of their lifelong friendship as it evolved from player-coach to professional equals to good friends. The relationship was always grounded in respect. Auerbach never tried to alter Russell’s then-revolutionary basketball style, nor did he ever interfere with or critique Russell’s involvement in the civil-rights movement. Auerbach’s Jewish heritage exposed him to some of the same prejudices Russell experienced in segregated Boston, though they never compared notes. Auerbach cultivated a public persona associated with words like gruff or curmudgeon that are partially accurate but

woefully incomplete. He was extraordinarily intelligent, fearless, and sensitive to what would bring out the best in those around him. Russell understands these characteristics and has produced a moving tribute to his friend and, in a larger sense, to friendship. --Wes Lukowsky

When Bill Russell joined the Boston Celtics in 1957 as the nation's first prominent black basketball star, he was not expecting much from coach Red Auerbach. Despite two national college championships and an Olympic gold medal, Russell's previous coaches—all whites—had barely spoken to him. Russell's style was unorthodox, redefining the meaning of defense and offense, and many scouts dismissed him. Yet Auerbach, the Jewish outsider in Irish Boston, immediately took to Russell, the African American from Louisiana and Oakland, and he was a coach like no other. Auerbach listened to his players, experimented freely, and knit together a team based only on results. Together they made sports history, winning 11 championships in 13 years. Along the way, Auerbach elevated Russell to player-coach, the first African-American coach in league history. Together, they battled prejudice both on and off the court, and created a team chemistry for the ages. Even this glory is surpassed by another, little known aspect of their relationship: they became lifelong friends. As Russell explains, they were prepared for each other by their fathers, both strong men who loved their sons unconditionally. They both intuitively understood the dynamics of male friendship: there are many things left unsaid, but there is always understanding and respect. Over the many years since Russell retired from the Celtics and moved to the west coast, they saw each other rarely but spoke on the phone regularly. They were always there for each other. As Auerbach fell ill and declined, Russell was there, knowing how to reach out while respecting his former coach's privacy. When Auerbach passed away in October, 2006, Russell refused to speak publicly about a relationship that was so deeply personal. Here, he offers a tribute greater than any speech. This is a book not just for sports lovers, not just for fathers and sons, but for male friendships of all shapes and sizes.

I originally had mixed emotions about this book and would have rated it lower if I had written the review prior to the excellent ending. In summation, this is a very short, fast read where Bill Russell describes his unique relationship and total understanding between two friends who can be so close while communicating so little. But this book needs a better set-up than a book of friendship and Russell supplies that here. He describes his history as a black man and traces his influence to his widowed father who raised him with the ultimate in high standards of integrity. But remember this is also a black player entering sports shortly after Jackie Robinson. Russell had had poor relationships

with previous coaches and had been subjected to 1950s racism such as being unable to dine or sleep with the white members of the team in the south. Not mentioned in great detail are the stories of racism when Bill Russell bought a home in Boston and the racism he faced. There is quite a humorous story of trash can noise which police said was racoon caused. Then Russell requested a gun permit. End of noise. But to complete the back story for this book you must know that in addition to be an exceptional athlete, Russell was an incredibly intelligent and private man who even refused autographs to his teammates for their family. With this background Russell describes how he expected another poor relationship with his coach only to find in Red Auerbach a Jewish man who also had suffered racism and was solely focused on winning and treating his players well. Once he knew what was important to Russell, he treated him as an accomplice, always asking his opinion and never disrespecting him. Throughout the book Russell describes the deepening relationships with examples of their unique friendship which in many cases are quite minor and not worthy of a book. BUT, at the end of the book Russell eloquently ties this altogether as he talks of his friends death, their intertwined family, and why the most private man I know would take the time to write a book of arguably the second most important relationship of his life, with his coach and friend, Red Auerbach. This book will appeal to Boston fans, sports fans in general and people interested in interpersonal relationships with only a passing interest in sports. NOTE: While I mentioned racism more than once as it affects the back story of this book, it is not a focus of this book whatsoever other than some early stories in the 50s describing how it impacted parts of their relationship. Please do not let this turn you off this book.

Bill Russell may be one of the more underrated sports gods in American history. His achievements on the playing field rival anything Babe Ruth, Lance Armstrong or Carl Lewis ever accomplished: Two NCAA championships in three years, one Olympic Gold medal in his only try, and 11 NBA titles in 13 seasons with the Celtics. He is almost certainly the winningest athlete in American history, despite the folks who like to cite Michael Jordan or Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. And his post playing career has been noteworthy as well. The man has written some excellent books ("Second Wind", this one) and lived a life seemingly filled with dignity and self respect. "Red and Me" is Russell's love letter to his friend and former manager with the Boston Celtics, and should not be missed by both fans of the Celtics or NBA or by those interested in living a quiet, dignified life, as Russell has apparently done. Well worth reading. Recommended.

What a great parable/life lesson about what male friendship can be all about. This is a keeper for my

library and planned gift for my godson.

Unlikely friendship of 2 giants in the nba.

The secret to the unique friendship between Arnold "Red" Auerbach and Bill Russell has to be the mutual respect each had for the other. Red was the first coach Russell ever had who let him be himself. Rather than impose his own will on him Auerbach was smart enough and secure in his own position to allow Russell to "do his thing" on the basketball floor. Auerbach did admit to having two sets of rules, one for Russell and one for the remaining members of the team. Russell, to his credit, didn't take advantage of the situation. Both Auerbach and Russell were upfront with each other in their relationship and each respected and didn't question the others' beliefs in matters not related to basketball. An interesting anecdote is how Russell came to be drafted by the Celtics. Yes, it has been told in other books, but the Celtics had to do some maneuvering to get the chance to draft Bill Russell. I'm sure Russell would have been successful even if he didn't have Arnold "Red" Auerbach for a coach, but fortunately this odd-couple were a perfect match for one another. This book is a quick read, but it does contain lessons that will interest future coaches on any level in addition to anyone who is interested in reading about human relationships.

Great book for anyone who wants an inside look into a Championship Relationship!

I LOVED this book. My boyfriend is a lifelong Celtics fan so I bought it for him, but decided to read it before giving it to him. Once I started, I couldn't put it down. It's easy reading, and pure delight. It's so rare to see athletes and celebrities with the kind of integrity and character displayed by both Russell and Auerbach, and it's unlikely they'll be a pairing quite like them again. This is a not just an inspiration for sports fans, but for anyone who appreciates the true meaning of team work, friendship, commitment, and respect. It's also filled with wonderful anecdotes - often humorous, touching, and educational. If you know a Celtics fan, this makes a priceless gift.

This excellent book is about two of the NBA originals. I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the nature of their unique relationship and less about the game.

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