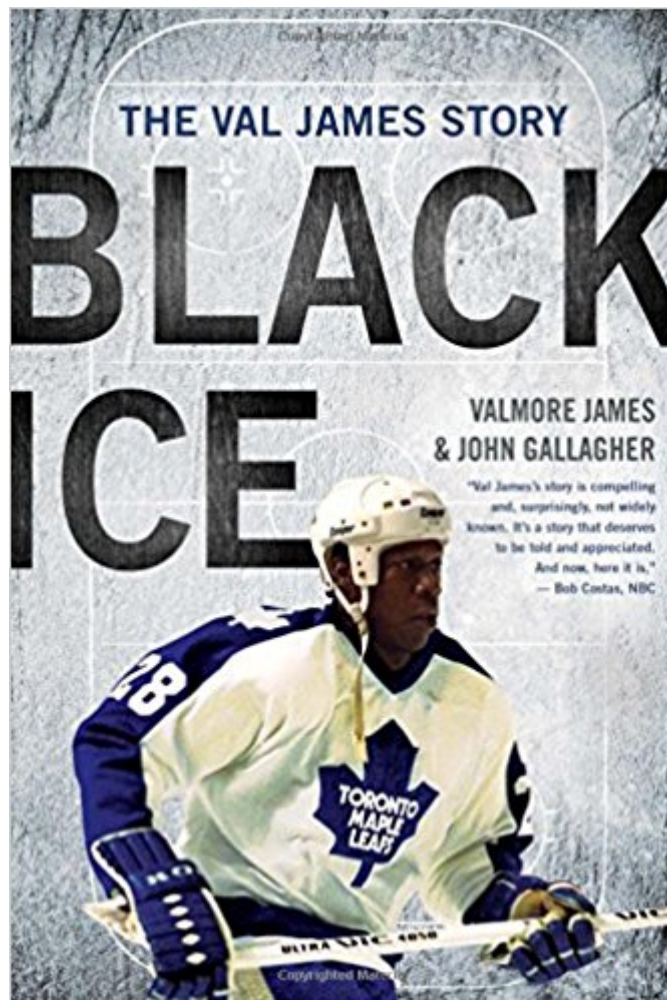


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Black Ice: The Val James Story



Synopsis

The first black American in the NHL tells his storyVal James became the first African American player in the NHL when he took to the ice with the Buffalo Sabres in 1982, and in 1987 he became the first black player of any nationality to skate for the Toronto Maple Leafs. Born in central Florida, James grew up on Long Island and received his first pair of skates for his 13th birthday. At 16, James left home to play in Canada, where he was the only black person in junior and, often, in the whole town. While popular for his tough play and winning personality, the teenager faced racist taunts at opposing arenas, and the prejudice continued at all levels of the game. In his two NHL stints, James defined himself as a smart team player and opponent, known for his pugilistic skills. Black Ice is the untold story of a trail-blazing athlete who endured and overcame discrimination to realize his dreams and become an inspiration for future generations.

Book Information

Hardcover: 232 pages

Publisher: ECW Press (February 10, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1770412018

ISBN-13: 978-1770412019

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 6.2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 61 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #566,796 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #57 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Sports & Outdoors > Hockey](#) #83 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional Canada](#) #166 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Hockey](#)

Customer Reviews

“Val James’s story is compelling, and surprisingly, not widely known. It’s a story that deserves to be told and appreciated. And now, here it is.” — Bob Costas, broadcaster for NBC and MLB
“Black Ice is an engaging read that sheds some important light on the subject of racism in hockey. James is an entertaining narrator, and his story is certainly one worth spending some time with.” — Winnipeg Free Press
“James may have been the first African American to play in the NHL, but that’s just a small part of his fascinating story.” — PuckJunk.com
“Black Ice is a fascinating story of an individual who showed tenacity and courage in amassing a lengthy hockey career.” —

“While racism shaped James’ career in some ways his pugilistic talents were honed while retaliating to the racist taunts spewed by his opponents and may have inhibited it in others, much of his story is funny and upbeat. Black Ice ultimately is the proud tale of a man who enjoyed almost every moment of his career.”
• The Hockey News

The first Black American in the NHL tells his story now in trade paper Val James received his first pair of skates for his 13th birthday and by 16, he left his home in New York to play in Canada, where he was the only black person on his junior team and, often, in the whole town. While popular for his tough play and winning personality, the teenager faced racist taunts at opposing arenas. The prejudice he encountered continued at all levels of the game. He became the first African American NHLer when he took to the ice with the Buffalo Sabres in 1982, and in 1987 he was the first black player of any nationality to skate for the Toronto Maple Leafs. In his two NHL stints, James defined himself as a team player known for his pugilistic skills. As featured in a Fox News Black History Month documentary, on NHL.com, NPR’s Morning Edition, ESPN’s Olbermann, and in Newsday, the L.A. Times, and the New York Times, Black Ice is the untold story of a trail-blazing athlete who endured and overcame discrimination to realize his dreams and become an inspiration for future generations. This edition includes a new afterword that explores James’ legacy. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Make sure you are comfortable with profanity before allowing your children to read this book. While the age range suggests this book is appropriate from a reading level perspective for kids in roughly grades 4-8, the content and language certainly may not be. This depends on individual views I guess, but the ‘f word’ is used regularly as are others. I also purchased the audio version for car rides, so reading it AND hearing it is a double whammy from my perspective. I just was not at all expecting this when purchasing for summer reading for my 7th grader. As far as a book review overall, it is a good read for boys in particular who aren’t wild about reading and if your son happens to be obsessed with ice hockey, he will likely enjoy it, but just beware the language at the outset.

This book was written well and takes you through an interesting story of a black kid from Long Island who became a professional hockey player. The racist taunts he got from players and fans were heartbreaking and made you root for Mr. James. It also painted a vivid picture of what life as a minor league hockey player was like in the 70s and 80s. The reason I did not give this book five

stars is because I was left wanting more. For example, Mr. James was close to making the NHL for years (played in the AHL, the next league down), how did he feel about this? Wouldn't it be frustrating being on the outside looking in for years? Another question I had were his relationships with those in the African American community, did he have fans? Was he ignored? Was he ridiculed by them for playing a "white" sport? Finally, what was his life like after retirement? Was he financially OK? Where did he live? Anyway, if it was a lousy book I wouldn't care so it wouldn't be an issue. The thing is, the story was compelling enough that I wish the authors had given us more information.

I purchased this book recently and read it over a vacation. The book covers the trail of career from a Long Island rink Val's father worked at, through his minor (youth) hockey, minor pro and the games he played in the NHL. To re-state the fact, he was the first American born African American player to play in the NHL. A lot of the book deals with the race based abuse Val had coming up through the ranks of the game. But he also had a lot of the same experiences most young men did coming up through the game, with a lot of the same pranks and adventures. Val was a tough hombre, but he also was persistent and followed his dream. He could have had more time in the NHL and was not given proper use in my opinion. So much of a career is dependent on teams management and coaching and ownership. The Leafs were always a team in the bright spotlight of scrutiny and pressure. I believe at the time (by Val's jersey) were owned by the legend (both good and bad) Harold Ballard. Yeah things were a bit wacky under that regime. I had previously been involved in a book project about minor league hockey in a specific city and am always looking for hockey biographies and inside stories on the game and players particularly from previous eras. Much of Val's story may have been lost in time and it was indicated that some has been omitted for discretion. It took some luck as well as persistence to find him, a small story in itself. As my headline implies, I wish the book was twice as long, it was that entertaining and touching for me. Congratulations Val for having your story finally told, it's well worth the price

An excellent account of the trials and tribulations of a young man in his attempt to gain success in professional hockey. When one considers the fact he was black where a very small percentage are black, the treatment from fans could be merciless. He literally fought his way from the lowest levels to the ultimate top of the hockey world - the National Hockey League. He paid his dues in a time that fighting was considered by many as the easiest route to success, he showed that he understood that he would be the target of many fighters seeking to boost their reputations. He started late when

compared to Canadian kids but through his constant drive but through perseverance and constant drive to meet his ultimate objectives he rode buses for years and eventually met success. The book is sometimes written in some cases from the viewpoint of the language of the hockey dressing room. Consequently, the reader should not be shocked. I enjoyed the book and would highly recommend in showing one of the difficult hockey life as one strives to make it to the NHL .

Val tells us a concise, entertaining, and emotional story that gives a glimpse into what he went through on his way to the NHL. It is a very relevant story that serves to remind us hockey fanatics how white our sport really is. Hopefully Val's story and the growing number of men of color in the NHL will inspire more young people of color to get involved in the sport. This can only make the league stronger and more inclusive. Thanks for sharing, Val!

I loved the candor of this book, I mean Mr V. just told it like it was! The only thing I couldn't appreciate about this novel was all the accolades at the end. If the people thought so highly of Mr. V., why didn't he get more time in the pros? Also why didn't any of them do anything when the crowds at various stadiums were calling out the "n" word? America is an ill country due to their racist ways! It's real, sad when a person can't enjoy the sport they love because some ugly people think they don't belong. As for me I'm very proud Mr. V. was a hockey player! A black hockey player how great, thanks for this fantastic book Mr, V. By the way I really enjoyed the pictures as well.

Fantastic!!! I was not familiar with Val James's story until I read this book. James overcame not just normal hurdles on the road to the NHL, but the ugly barriers of racism that, sadly, still persisted three and a half decades after Jackie Robinson broke the race barrier in the MLB. Not just for sports fans or hockey fans but a book for everyone who enjoys seeing the good guy win. Black Ice is story of adversity, tenacity and triumph that will anger and thrill you. Kudos to John Gallagher and James for telling his story. Highly recommend!!!!

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