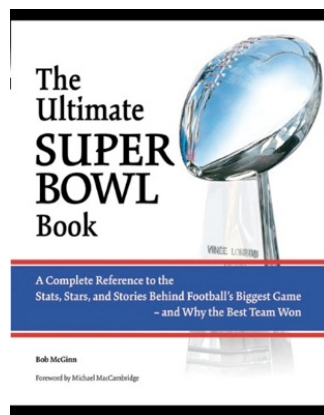


AURORA BOOKS

Top Sportswriter McGinn at Aurora Books Thursday, December 3



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and *JS Online* sportswriter **Bob McGinn** will be signing his *The Ultimate Super Bowl Book* at Aurora Books on **Thursday, December 3**, from **5:00-7:00 p.m.**

McGinn has covered the Green Bay Packers in inimitable style since 1984--the Forrest Gregg era! He is a five-time Wisconsin State sportswriter of the year and the chief draw for *JS Online's* Packer Insider for paid subscribers. McGinn has written thoughtful, analytical essays on every Super Bowl that take the reader beyond the usual platitudes to discover the reasons for victory and defeat. At \$18.00 for a signed copy, this is the perfect Christmas gift for the sports fan(s) in your family. Don't miss this chance to meet a great writer.

DAY OF MUSIC: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Join us at the bookshop for some holiday cheer, when we continue our tradition (begun last year) of singing **Christmas carols**. Talented **Casey Kadlubowski** on the keyboard will accompany carolers.

aurorabookshop.com; aurora@mari.net; 906-863-5266

WHAT I HAVE BEEN READING

The Ultimate Super Bowl Book: A Complete Reference to the Stats, Stars, and Stories Behind Football's Biggest Game-and Why the Best Team Won by Bob McGinn; MVP Books; 384 pages

Discovering Bob McGinn

Anyone who follows the Green Bay Packers in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* or on *JS Online* is familiar with Bob McGinn. He is the football expert nonpareil, at once a gritty analyst and a fine stylist.

Simply put, McGinn may not be the best football writer in the business, but it wouldn't take long, as they say, to call the roll. During one recent online chat with Mr. McGinn, one fan referred to him--without a hint of facetiousness--as a poet. This may be a slight stretch, but perhaps not. McGinn's work reminds me of, say, James Agee's old film reviews. Agee had impossibly high standards for what a movie should do. Maybe he needed to eat more ice cream and drink a little less. But it still is impossible to dismiss his passion for film or his unique analyses, even if they were informed by a search for purity and perfection that might not exist.

That is McGinn: dogged research, deep thought, exceptionally high standards--all delivered with style. In other words, sports writing as a craft and art. Sure there is something of the mock heroic in all sports writing. And also, when things aren't going well for a team, the current trend is the opposite: a layer of cynicism. McGinn's writings almost always transcend the genre, if you will, which is a tough job when one must turn out several extensive pieces each week.

Discovering the writings of Bob McGinn was something of a revelation and even a bit of a hoot. I first started reading his work when Linda and I moved to Rhinelander, Wisconsin, in 1994. The move didn't last long, but by the time the 1995 draft rolled around I was an unabashed Bob McGinn fan. McGinn helped turn me, and probably a lot of other readers, into something of an amateur NFL Draftnik. This did not do much for me in practical terms, but it did amuse my friends when I would watch games with them and was able to audibly match players--not just on the Packers, but for the opposition--with the schools they attended.

Over the years, McGinn has built a network of expert sources--scouts, general managers, and so forth--that informs his analyses. His style is now much emulated, though not surpassed but, back then, it seemed unique. Some of his sources spoke on record and some did not. The 1995 draft put the Packers over the top; they won the Super Bowl the next year. I read all of McGinn's stuff before that draft. And I read "what the

scouts had to say" after the draft. Talk about candid--and candid could be extremely humorous. One Packer pick was described thusly by a scout, and this is at least near verbatim: "God, he's a lazy bugger." After that, Linda and I always called that player Lazy Bugger. As in, "Oh no. Look out. They put in Lazy Bugger."

The same sort of fascinating, candid, comments from expert sources--this time on the record--inform *The Ultimate Super Bowl Book*. The same copious research goes into every paragraph in all 43 chapters (for those who have difficulty with Roman numerals, there have been 43 Super Bowls). Each chapter contains important facts: game attendance, game time weather conditions, scoring summary, rosters and substitutions, coaches, team and individual statistics, and more. Interspersed throughout the book are top ten lists: best performances, plays, and so forth. But at the heart of each chapter are well-researched, thoughtful, essays. In other words, pure Bob McGinn.

In fact, my major criticism of *The Ultimate Super Bowl Book* is that the essays are so much more interesting than many of the games themselves. Of course, this is not McGinn's fault but, in technical terms, a triumph, and this criticism is balanced by the knowledge that the game, like it or loathe it, is a cultural fixture, virtually a national holiday, and thus deserving of the finest care. The book functions as both a vital history and memoir. In that sense, the book lives up to its title.

I did find a few publishing/editing errors in the book. I am talking about a few noticeable and easily remedied errors that I discovered in the context of a 384-page book that is filled with good bits. One important issue for this reader was this: with so much information packed into each chapter, the aforementioned player and coach rosters were needed as a sort of key because referents could have been clearer. For example, I experienced some mild annoyance when, at the start of a paragraph, a last name alone would be used that had not appeared earlier in a chapter or that had appeared several pages prior. Also, this book probably is not for everyone: in substance and tone *The Ultimate Super Bowl Book* assumes a certain level of prior knowledge on the part of the reader. But for those who are not entirely novices but also might not be familiar with all the intricacies of pro football, the book is simply a highly stimulating education. For football lovers, *The Ultimate Super Bowl Book* is a feast. --RP; LM, ed.

In Memoriam: Bonnie Hendrickson, American Original.