Matt Cain

Game On

Can you love the player if you hate the game?
About the Author

Matt Cain is a writer, broadcaster, and a leading commentator on LGBTQ+ issues. He was Channel 4’s first Culture Editor, Editor-in-Chief of Attitude magazine, and is a regular presenter on Virgin Radio Pride. He’s also an ambassador for Manchester Pride and the Albert Kennedy Trust, plus a patron of LGBT+ History Month. Born in Bury and brought up in Bolton, Matt now lives in London with his husband, Harry, and their cat, Nelly.

Discussion Questions

The front cover: What are your first impressions of the illustration? What differences / similarities are there between the two characters? Can you predict what the story will be about?

Chapter 1:

- What do we know about Tom from this opening chapter? What does his physical appearance look like? Does he have any family? What motivates him?
- What do you think about some of the comments the players use when referring to the issue of LGBTQ+ acceptance within football?
- Why does Tom have a ‘bad feeling’ about the football team supporting the media project? Do you think he has good reason to feel this way?

Chapter 2:

- What are your first impressions of Cosmo?
- Why is he so reluctant to work with the football team?

Chapter 3:

- After overhearing the conversation on the train, what makes Cosmo ‘shrink back in his seat’?
- Why does Tom not feel able to be the first footballer to be publicly ‘out’? What does Tom’s friend and team-mate Uche think about this?
- Tom and Cosmo have a challenging encounter in the car park. What are they each thinking at this point in the book? Can you predict how the story will develop?
Chapter 4:
- What do we learn about LGBTQ+ stereotyping in this chapter? What awkward moments have Cosmo’s friends encountered whilst dating?
- What do you think about Cosmo’s relationship with his boss?
- What is Cosmo’s dream?

Chapter 5:
- Why does Tom feel conflicted about his feelings for Cosmo?
- How are Tom and Cosmo’s lifestyles different?
- Why does Tom believe he is a ‘fraud’?

Chapter 6:
- Tom and Cosmo begin to understand each other better in this chapter. Sum up the range of emotions Tom feels. Why do you think he bolted away from the lift?

Chapter 7:
- Tom is determined to make his father proud. How do you feel he would react to his son revealing that he is gay?

Chapter 8:
- Cosmo ‘reassures himself that he has done the right thing’. Do you agree?

Chapter 9:
- What causes Cosmo to ‘feel a stab of shame’? Do you think that perhaps, he too is also guilty of stereotyping?
- What do you think about Tom’s vow to ‘force his gayness back inside’? Do you think this is possible?

Chapter 10:
- Cosmo and Tom have their own worries about their date. How are they different?
- What did they agree on to cause the conversation to ‘hit a dead end’?
Chapter 11:
- What spurs Tom on to ‘accept his sexuality’?
- Put yourself in Tom’s position. What does he stand to gain by coming out as gay? What does he have to lose?

Chapter 12:
- What do you think of Tom’s plan. Do you think he will be able to focus fully on the game?
- Why is Tom reluctant to speak to the team psychologist before the game? Do you agree with him?

Chapter 13:
- Were you surprised by Tom’s father’s revelation? What does this say about their relationship?

Chapter 14:
- It’s match day and the day of Tom’s big interview. What do you think the public reaction will be? Do you think his teammates will be supportive?

Chapter 15:
- How do you feel about the public and sporting world’s reaction to Tom’s sexuality being revealed? How is this different to his family’s reaction?
- What did you think of the ending to the book? Was it as you expected? Can you think of a different way the story could have ended?
- How have the two main characters, Tom and Cosmo developed over the course of the story? Do you like them?

Final thoughts on Game On:
- What did you think of the book? Was it an enjoyable read? Would you recommend it to a friend?
- What did you learn about LGBTQ+ issues from the book? What would you say is the moral of the book? What message does it promote?