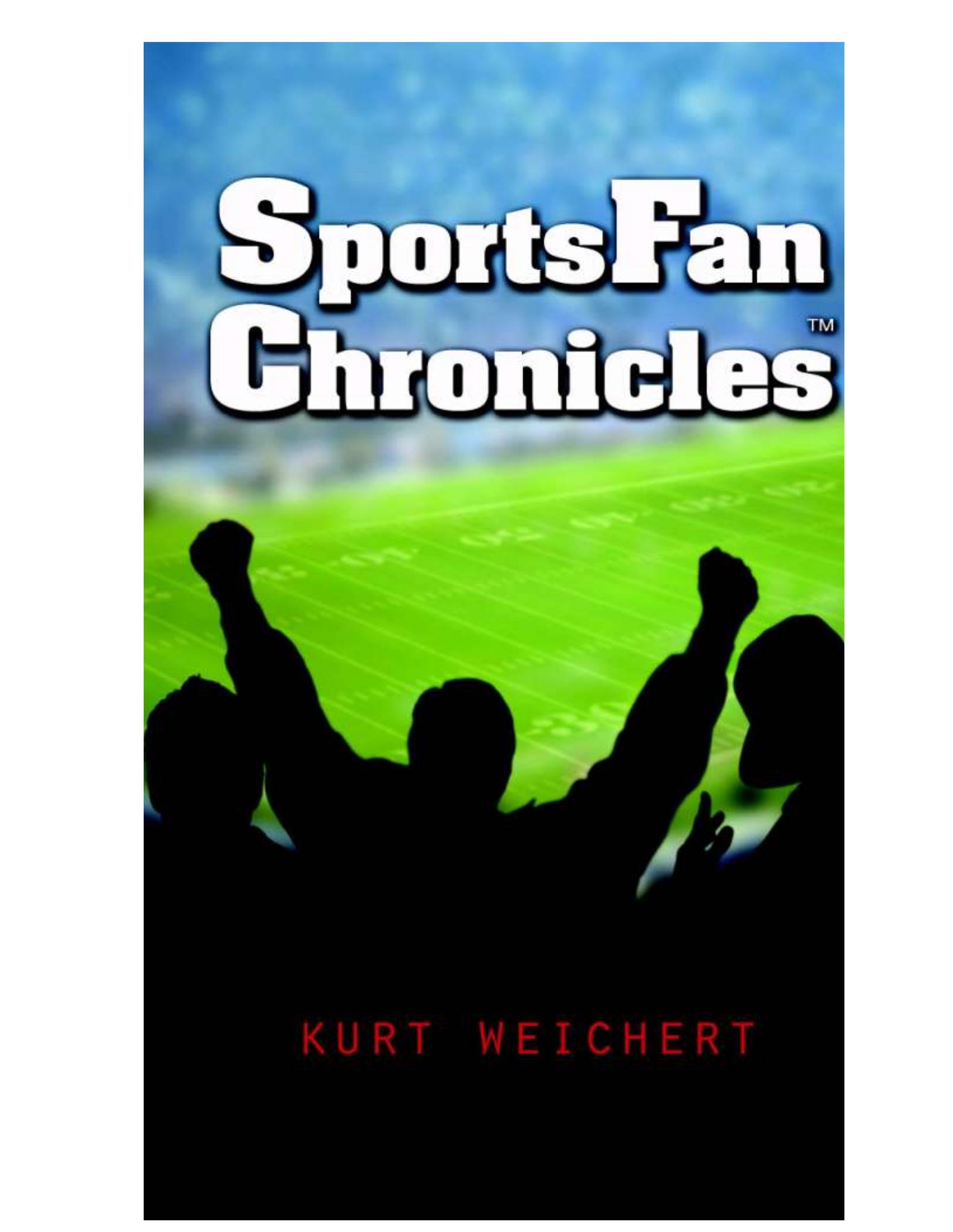


SportsFan Chronicles™

The cover art features a vibrant green and blue background with a blurred stadium scene. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several fans are shown with their arms raised in celebration. The title 'SportsFan Chronicles' is prominently displayed at the top in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a black drop shadow. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located to the right of the word 'Chronicles'. The author's name, 'KURT WEICHERT', is printed in red at the bottom of the cover.

KURT WEICHERT

SportsFan ChroniclesTM

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SportsFan Chronicles™

Kurt Weichert

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SportsFan ChroniclesTM

Kurt Weichert

To all the avid sports fans in the world and to their friends and family who lovingly tolerate them.

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A Note to the Reader

SportsFan Chronicles[™] is the first book in a series of fictional comedies. The characters are friends who love watching sports— any and all sports. The stories are about their friendship and camaraderie.

The main character is a fictional version of me. As for my real-life friends, I left them out so as not to embarrass them. Instead each character is a composite of people I encountered through the years, and the situations are much the same—combined events. The fictional storyline is based on what my life could have been if I had moved back to Chicago after I started dating Darci, whom I met after I moved to South Bend, Indiana.

I came up with the idea for *SportsFan Chronicles*[™] when I wrote a series of scripts for television in the 1990s called *TheSportfan*. Despite the positive response to the project I decided to take a very long break from writing for personal reasons. Less than a year ago, with renewed interest and enthusiasm, I decided to convert my original scripts to manuscript form. Now the storyline commences in the late 1990s and then fast forwards to present day. The second book takes place shortly after this one ends.

I think everyone will recognize themselves or someone they know in each of these characters.

CHAPTER 1

The Game

Kurt Weichert watched as the endless suburbs surrounding Indianapolis zipped by at seventy-five miles per hour, the rows of white houses growing thicker as he approached the city proper. Kurt knew somewhere inside each white box was a sports fan just like him, gearing up for game four of the Eastern Conference Finals against his hometown Bulls—a game he and his friends would soon be watching from right behind the basket!

“Bernie, you really did it this time,” said Kurt, looking over at his friend, who was piloting the Ford Explorer. “You big, loveable son of gun, this is going to be the best trip ever.”

“Hear, hear!” came the chorus from the backseat, where Kurt’s friends Brian, Victor, and Chuck had been arguing over the Pacers’ chances against Michael Jordan’s Bulls. The consensus? They had none.

“The Pacers and the Bulls—could any two teams call two more different places home?” asked Bernie, his bulk filling the seat of his SUV. “I mean, this is like the country mouse against the city mouse except the city mouse brought his gun.”

“Just think,” said Brian, Kurt’s coworker and best friend, “we were going to spend tonight at some crappy bar, getting drunk and watching the game with a hundred other ticketless schmucks. Now we’re going to be getting drunk with twenty thousand dear, dear friends.”

“Okay, I was with you until the ‘dear friends’ part,” said Bernie. “These people are going to want to kill us.”

“Well, close enough,” said Brian. “Not even the venom of thousands of dairy farmers can make this night less than freakin’ awesome.”

After leaving the urban landscape of Chicago, Kurt and his friends watched as the cows replaced the skyscrapers. Kurt, twenty-five, squirmed in his seat like a five-year-old at the prospect of sitting so close to the action.

The friends were happy to get away from Chicago and work, where Kurt and Brian’s tyrannical boss, Frank, was still poring over phone messages and invoices, trying desperately to leave his mark on Pointy Foods Services. Kurt’s friends, Chuck, Victor, and Bernie, were prime customers. On nights like this one, Frank sat at his desk with a fifth of Jack Daniels and a to-do list a mile long.

“I feel good, I feel lucky. This is going to be one hell of a weekend,” said Chuck. “Did you really bet on the Pacers like Brian said you did,” asked Kurt. “They’re going to be decimated by Jordan. He always plays great against them.”

Chuck looked at Kurt, a quizzical expression on his face. “A: I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about because I know the Bulls are going to win big.” At this Kurt shot a look at Brian, who had clearly lied to him. “And B: I’m talking about being lucky with the ladies. I’ve got my laser pointer with me.” At this announcement, Chuck held out his arm as though wielding Excalibur and announced in his most regal voice, “Guaranteed hookup commenced!”

A collective groan filled the car as Victor, Kurt, Bernie, and Brian rolled their eyes.

“Chuck, did you bring the laser pointer because, even though you own a string of delis, the women of Chicago treat you like Jabba the Hutt?” asked Brian. “You bring that thing every time we go out and the only thing it guarantees is getting to third base with a bouncer or security guard.”

“Excuse you,” said Chuck. “It gets lots of women. I just point the laser at a babe at the bar and that gets her attention. Then I simply work my magic and she’s mine. Mwahahaha.”

“Yeah, then they smell you and they’re gone,” replied Brian.

"If the smell doesn't scare them away, then your bell bottoms will," said Kurt. "What the hell are you thinking wearing those? This isn't the Age of Aquarius."

Chuck looked down at his flared pants; he was slightly hurt, though catching hell from Brian and Kurt was nothing new. Despite his financial success, Chuck was a geek extraordinaire and, despite his protestations, he knew it. His fashion sense was erratic and guided mostly by MTV, though his Coke-bottle glasses and untamed hair were accessories he couldn't shed.

"For your information, Kurt, fashion goes in cycles," he replied. "For example, right now women appreciate men sporting the nineteen sixties look."

From the driver's seat, Bernie turned his head around to see the commotion up close. How the hell did his car get filled with these people? he wondered.

"Hate to break it to you, Chuck, but the only one sure to get a girl is Victor," he said. "If you check the fact sheet you'll see Victor is the one with a date tonight, an Indiana Pacers cheerleader no less. By the way, Victor, have I told you how much I hate you?"

Victor, sometimes called "the Italian Stallion," looked the part. Six feet tall with black hair thicker than sagebrush, his conquests were made easier by an Italian accent and considerable personal wealth. At twenty-seven years old he was the owner of three Italian restaurants that, on many occasions, acted as his personal dating service.

"How do you say? It's density," said Victor, who couldn't quite get English down pat despite having been in the country since the age of fifteen.

"*Destiny*, Victor. The word is *destiny*, not *density*."

"Two years ago she was one of my waitresses," continued Victor, oblivious to Brian's input. "I nurtured her, usually in the stock room, and I always knew that woman would go on to bigger things."

"Yeah, she went on to bigger things all right," said Bernie, cupping his hands over his chest. "Did you finance those as an investment in your own love life?"

Bernie and Chuck both laughed at their fellow restaurateur. Bernie owned four comedy clubs, each called Bernie's Comedy Club, numbered one through four.

Brian, sitting in the middle of the backseat, squeezed between Victor and Chuck, tuned out the sounds Bernie was making and turned to Kurt. He'd been avoiding talking to him about the way they'd rushed out the door of Pointy Foods, Brian insisting their work for the day was done.

"That's enough talk about loose women," Brian said. "Kurt, remember how I told you we had no more customers left to service?"

"Oh, no, Brian, please don't tell me we weren't done with work today," responded Kurt, his face turning red from anger and from the knowledge that he would have to listen to Frank rant the following Monday morning about how "the customer is your life" and how "you never leave before the job is done."

"Brian, you're killing me," Kurt continued. "Frank is going to have a field day with this. Once he sobers up Monday morning he's going to call us into his office and go on for half an hour about how much we drag the company down and how irresponsible we are. I can't take that for another day, especially with his whiskey breath wafting across the desk at us."

Brian slumped down in his seat as though he were reclining and put his feet up on an imaginary desk. A grin spread across his face. "I swear, Nancy, seeing you flustered is always worth it. Relax. Four small customers we serviced earlier in the week called and said they need more product to get them through the weekend. That's all."

"That's all? Why didn't you say something?" asked Kurt, his voice rising in exasperation. "We could've fit them in before we left."

"Heck no, my friend. They were spread out all over town," Brian answered. "Screw it. Frank secretly checks our voicemails anyway, so let him go see what they need. Besides, he likes nothing more than playing the hero."

Back in the office, Frank's face was flush with anger as he held Brian's phone to his ear. One customer after another was complaining about running low on supplies and threatening to end their relationship with Pointy Foods. Frank stood up suddenly and threw Brian's receiver across the room. It took the phone base with it.

With sweat pouring from his forehead, Frank quickly sat down again. The alcohol was taking hold and he paid a physical penalty for his intense anger. The penalties were adding up.

At thirty-five Frank looked as if he were forty-five. A smoker since the age of twelve, when he had bummed a cigarette off his grandmother, Frank also had a strong relationship with many of the five-dollar whiskeys. He was just five feet, six inches tall with a round middle and disheveled hair.

The Pointy Foods sales office, where Frank spent most of his days and evenings and nights, was Frank's home away from home. The office had fewer than a dozen desks. Each was paired with another and home to a computer, a desktop calendar, a small lamp, and a phone. The phone was each salesman's best tool and the real heart of the enterprise.

Set apart from the clumped desks, which occupied what might have been the lowlands and consumed nearly a third of the room, was an office with a large window overlooking the sales floor. In this office prowled Frank, master of all he surveyed—at least when he hadn't drawn the shades in order to focus his energies on new sales strategies.

Each afternoon was grievance time as Frank slipped farther away from sobriety and reason. His door would fling open and he would make a beeline for whichever salesman was struggling that week.

Frank's speech, sometimes slurred, would always involve something about how Napoleon had lost at Waterloo because he hadn't followed up with his commanders and how if he'd just called them back they would have ordered more bread and butter from their good friends at Pointy Foods.

After collecting himself and Brian's phone from the floor, Frank notified the warehouse he would be coming over to gather supplies for Brian's clients. He hustled out the door and into the night, swearing Napoleon would have his revenge.

"Brian, I swear, if Frank gives me the Napoleon speech when we get into the office you're buying me lunch for a week." Kurt shook his head. It wasn't the first time Brian had flirted with disaster at their job. But he and Kurt were usually at the top of the sales charts, so it rarely led to any serious punishment, especially if they assuaged Frank with a bottle of his favorite liquor—whatever that happened to be that particular week.

After parking in the VIP lot at Market Square Arena, courtesy of Victor's girlfriend, the five friends poured out of Bernie's Explorer and walked through the stadium tunnels. Although Victor had come to the game with his friends and had secured their VIP parking, he had no intention of sitting with them.

"You gents enjoy the game," said Victor as they approached the lower-level seating. "I have business to attend to."

"That's business to *attend* to," said Bernie. "Oh never mind. You're going to sit by the cheerleaders. Why am I helping you?"

Kurt, Brian, Bernie, and Chuck made their way to the seats behind one of the baskets.

"This is going to be so sweet," said Kurt. "Can you imagine? We'll be able to grab Jordan's tongue when he dunks on that asshat Reggie Miller."

Behind Kurt and his friends, the Pacers' faithful grumbled something about how Jordan wouldn't get close to the basket. A skinny, sixty-something woman dressed in a neon-yellow tank top, blue MC Hammer pants, and a blue-and-yellow feather boa leaned in close to Brian.

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