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The 'Over Time' Literary Achievement Award For Sports Journalism

By Brian Hill

I love great sports writing. The ability to observe a sporting event and turn it into vivid word pictures

is truly an art. The problem today is that—what with the thousands of sports-related Internet sites and numerous Cable TV channels devoted to sports—there is more 'stuff' out there than even the most dedicated NFL fan can possibly keep up with. Some of it is gem-quality journalism, a lot of it is noisy, unpleasant junk.

So, how do we separate the good football writing from the bad, distinguish between the words artists and the finger painters?

I had wrestled with this question for years, without getting anywhere close to answering it. Then, earlier this week, it finally hit me! I discovered a rule we can all apply (and the rule is so simple that I am surprised I didn't discover it before):

THE MOST TALENTED FOOTBALL WRITERS AND BROADCASTERS TEND TO BE THOSE WHO SAY NICE THINGS ABOUT THE GREEN BAY PACKERS.

In fact, 'tend to be' might be too cautious a phrase. Actually, there is a near 100% correlation between writing talent and relentless optimism about the Packers.

My goal is to help you sift through all the football-related content out there and find the very best writing and to help you avoid the very worst.

The Packers Literary Corner will recognize and encourage excellence in football writing and broadcasting.

>From time to time I will select one truly deserving writer to receive the partially prestigious:

'Over Time' Literary Achievement Award

There will be several ways a journalist or broadcaster can become eligible to win this award:

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--Expressing gushing admiration for Brett Favre, to the point that Chicago Bears fans in the audience begin to get nauseous.

--Describing, at considerable length, why Lambeau Field is the best place to see an NFL game. Extra credit will be given for use of words such as magnificent, incredible, and phrases such as once-in-a-lifetime experience.

--Reminding readers that the Packers have won a league-high 12 Championships, beginning in 1929--no other team is even close to that achievement except the Chicago Bears with 9--and not misleading them with the fuzzy logic that other teams are the true "Dynasties" because they have won more Super Bowls. (An understanding of history is part of what makes a writer great).

--Demonstrating a talent for prognostication. This is the easiest way to qualify for the Over Time

Literary Achievement Award. All a writer has to do is maintain Green Bay in the #1 or #2 position in their NFL Team Rankings for 5 consecutive weeks. Consideration will also be given to those writers who recommend the Packers' entire starting lineup in their Fantasy Football leagues. Even our injured players.

Award winners receive an impressive package of prizes including an autographed copy of the novel, OVER TIME and a gift certificate for delicious Johnsonville Bratwurst.

But what do we do with the clueless, negative scribes? You know these guys. When you read the nonsense they write about the Packers, you'd think they were talking about the NFL's perennial doormat rather than the team that's had 12 winning seasons in the last 14 years. You really have to scratch your head when you read goofy things like 'the Packers will be so bad in 2006 that Brett will regret having come back for another season,' or truly brain dead predictions such as 'Green Bay will have the #1 pick in next year's Draft'.

You have to feel sorry for these people. They are trapped in a mental tar pit of ignorance and no one seems willing to throw them a lifeline. I feel compelled to do something to help these poor individuals get on the path to enlightenment, to help them find their 'Inner Cheesehead', if you will.

Let's visit the Internet, plunge into the digital mire and dredge up some of the most foolishly negative statements about the Packers. Then, we will critique what they had to say, and try to help them become better writers. Help them sharpen their thinking. Smooth out their literary style. And, recommend books they should read to get them back on the right track. It's the least we Packer fans can do.

That's why we're renowned as The Best Fans in the National Football League.

Text only about the author:

Brian Hill is the author of the novel "Over Time" – Money, Love and Football: All the Important Things in Life.

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<http://www.OverTimeTheNovel.com>

and several other books. You can read his blog *The Packers*

Literary Corner: A Cheese Blog at

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A Record 377 California Schools Honored With The Distinguished School Award

By Patricia Hawke

The California Schools created the California Schools Recognition Program in 1985. Its purpose is to publicize and reinforce California schools priorities, which are to improve student scholastic achievement and promote students based upon measurable objectives. The program identifies and honors public schools that exhibit exemplary and inspiring achievement. Though participation in the program is voluntary, the California Distinguished School Award is highly coveted.

To be considered for the award, California schools must meet a variety of eligibility requirements. These include designated federal and state accountability measures that are based upon the No Child Left Behind, Adequate Yearly Progress, and Academic Performance Index measurement programs. Approximately, five percent of California schools are selected each year for the award, with no fewer than 40 counties typically being represented.

The program alternates awards yearly between the elementary and secondary California schools. Year 2006 honors elementary schools.

California schools that meet the requirements complete an application and submit it to a team of local educators from across the state, which evaluate and score the merits of each school application. Schools with the highest scoring applications are selected as statewide nominees for the award. Nominated California schools then receive an onsite visit by a team of county school superintendents and members of the California Department of Education, who validate the accuracy of the application data.

Those California schools selected for the Distinguished School Award are honored at a statewide ceremony, where the state school superintendent awards a plaque and flag to each school. The program and annual ceremonies are funded through the generosity of prominent California corporations and statewide education organizations that believe educational excellence should be rewarded and encouraged publicly.

In 2006, a record 377 public elementary schools were honored with the California Distinguished School

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Award, surpassing the 302 elementary schools honored in 2004 — the last elementary school award cycle. They represent the largest number of elementary school awardees in the 21-year history of the program.

The 2006 California schools awardees were chosen from 190 school districts in 40 counties. They were selected from the largest number of eligible elementary schools to date, setting another record for the program. Of the more than 5,000 elementary schools in California, 2,043 were eligible to apply for the 2006 award. California schools are proving that student scholastic excellence can be nurtured and consistently improved.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on California schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/California/index.html>



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