

## Planète soccer T1

Resource links, décembre 2016



BÉRUBÉ, François

*Planète Soccer 1: La compétition*

Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 249p. Gr. 7-12. 978-2-89723-838-4. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: E

In this first novel of the *Planète Soccer Series*, Bérubé introduces us to his dynamic protagonist, Raphaël Rousseau and his world. A recent convert from hockey to soccer, Raphaël (who goes by Raf) is starting to shine on the field with his fellow players on their team, the Titans of Rimouski. They have the opportunity to travel to Québec City for an international tournament after winning the regionals in their category, and are excited by the challenge of improving their game as they face off against some excellent teams, such as one from Brazil. At the same time, Raf is dealing with his family's first move away from Rimouski to the smaller town of Le Bic, where Raf will be forced to enter a new school, leave his soccer team and most importantly, will no longer live next door to his life-long best friend, Sarah.

This coming-of-age story is highlighted by the theme of overcoming bullying through sport. When Raf enters his new school for the first time, he is immediately teased and mocked by the class bully, Jean-Seb. When Jean-Seb threatens him to stay behind the scenes by not entering a school-wide sports competition between teachers and students, La Coupe MSL, Raf initially decides to maintain the social strata of his new school and not participate, thus giving into Jean-Seb wishes. With the encouragement of Sarah, he finally decides that keeping any fighting between him and his rival would best be done on the soccer field. After all, Raf got to compete in an international soccer tournament, where he was the main goal-scorer for his team. He eventually takes up the challenge of teaching his new teammates the best way to kick a soccer ball and how to form a defensive line in order to win the tournament and beat his rival.

As a high school teacher himself, Bérubé is well aware of the challenges associated with growing up, playing sports, finding first love and starting out in a new school. That intimate knowledge of teens makes this an excellent read for any adolescent soccer fans or those dealing with the above-listed issues. Though the plot line is simple, it adequately captures Raf's new-found sense of anxiety when he has to meet new friends and decide if he really wants to take his relationship with Sarah a step further. Raf's sense of self-confidence vastly improves over the course of the novel, and this straight-forward character development makes the book realistic and relatable to teens. *Planète Soccer* is a debut to be applauded from a new writer, with an ending that will entice the reader to continue with the series.

*Thematic Links:* Family Relations; Soccer; Coming-of-Age; Bullying

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