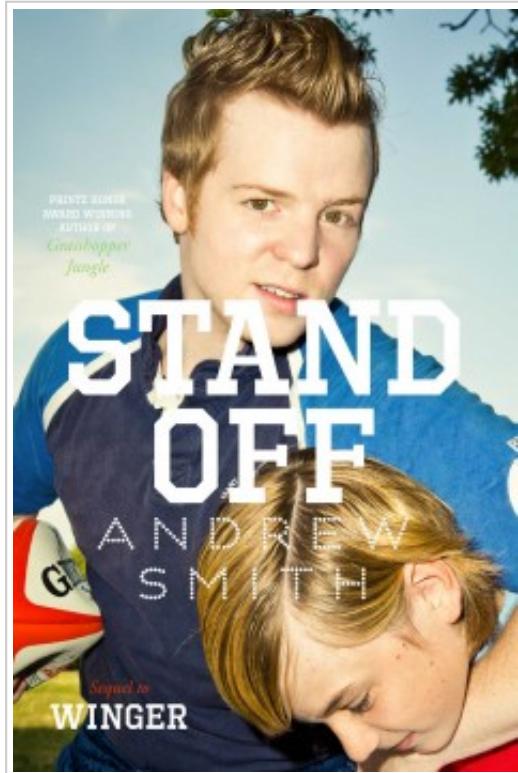


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Stand-Off

by Andrew Smith, Sam Bosma

Price: \$17.99(Hardcover)

Published: September 08, 2015

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: Ryan Dean West is back to his boarding school antics in this bitingly funny sequel to *Winger*, which Publishers Weekly called “alternately hilarious and painful, awkward and enlightening” (Publishers Weekly, starred review).

It's his last year at Pine Mountain, and Ryan Dean should be focused on his future, but instead, he's haunted by his past. His rugby coach expects him to fill the roles once played by his lost friend, Joey, as the rugby team's stand-off and new captain. And somehow he's stuck rooming with twelve-year-old freshman Sam Abernathy, a cooking whiz with extreme claustrophobia and a serious crush on Annie Altman—aka Ryan Dean's girlfriend, for now, anyway.

Equally distressing, Ryan Dean's doodles and drawings don't offer the relief they used to. He's convinced N.A.T.E. (the Next Accidental Terrible Experience) is...

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What We Say

Rugby, high school, comic books, girls, boys, friends, enemies, cooking shows, sex, cursing (sort of) and more are all present in "Stand-Off," a very welcome sequel to the highly amusing coming of age novel "Winger." I actually HATED the end to "Winger," a really funny book about Ryan Dean West and his gay best friend at boarding school, both of whom are nuts about playing rugby. Which is redundant, because anyone who plays rugby is by definition nuts. Anyway, it was a terrific book but ended -- bizarrely -- with some throwback, 1970s, the gay-kid-must-die finale so the straight kid can feel bad and manfully get on with his life. Now here's the sequel by Andrew Smith which manages to make me hate the ending of the first book a lot less and laugh a lot more. Ryan Dean West's internal monologue is consistently hilarious and self-deprecating and his drawings that accompany the book are really fun, along with his subtly witty word play and endearingly clumsy nature. And he is totally f'ed up. (The book has what I can only consider a strange running gag about almost no one approving of swearing. It's like an alternate universe to real life, though not to worry -- Ryan Dean West regularly swears in this book though he immediately confesses that whatever swear word he uses wasn't in fact what he actually said.) Indeed, most everyone is f'ed up. Ryan Dean entered this high school at a really young age so he's 15 and a senior. Now he's rooming with Sam Abernathy, a 12 year old who is just as out of place as Ryan Dean was back then. Sam Abernathy is a really good cook, really nerdy and has a puppy-like enthusiasm for darn near everything. But he's 12 and Ryan Dean is determined NOT to be nice to the kid, not to be friends with him. At all. The kid has claustrophobia and can't bear for Ryan Dean to be in the room when he's using their bathroom. So Ryan Dean freezes to death at night (the kid hyperventilates if the window isn't left open) when he's not standing in the hall while the kid uses the loo. Oh and Ryan Dean is literally freaking out. He's so unwound by his gay best friend's death that he's afraid to be with his girlfriend because surely something bad will happen to her too. And he gets panic attacks at night. Oh and another dude on the rugby team tells Ryan Dean he's bisexual and keeps hitting on him. And the younger brother of his gay best friend visits the school but despises Ryan Dean on sight. Or so Ryan Dean believes. It's all funny (truly!) and real and sexy (Ryan Dean's girlfriend is super cool and sexy and even sexier when she's chiding him, which is often) and while it's pretty rosy at the end, it's not like all problems are solved. And the fact that the trauma at the end of "Winger" reverberates throughout all of "Stand-Off" makes that cheap plot twist feel not so cheap after all. Author Andrew Smith gives it heft here, so now both books are better for it. Here's hoping Ryan Dean keeps a journal in college. -- Michael Giltz

[Less](#)

What Others Say

"A brave, wickedly funny novel about grief and finding a way to live with it, with sweetly realistic first sexual experiences." - **Kirkus Reviews, starred review**

"Ryan Dean's voice remains engaging, honest, and idiosyncratic (a page-long internal monologue follows his discovery of two teammates in a compromising situation). Smith capably expands on Ryan Dean's coming-of-age and path to emotional recovery, chronicled through his crude comics and growing maturity." - **Publishers Weekly, starred review**

"Smith has created a consistently interesting character whose singular sense of humor grows on readers. Plus, he nails the rough-and-tumble sport of rugby. This sequel won't disappoint fans." - **Booklist**

"The novel succeeds not only as an emotionally satisfying sequel but as a hopeful, honest account of coping with a