

Inside Out

Straight Talk from a Gay Jock

*by Mark Tewksbury
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Inside Out - Straight Talk from a Gay Jock chronicles the challenges and rewards of Olympian Gold Medalist Mark Tewksbury's life as a gay Olympic athlete. There are two stories in this book – the story of the gay athlete, and the story of rampant corruption of the IOC and illegal drug use by athletes prevalent in the Olympics at that time.

As Tewksbury worked toward his Olympic dream, it became harder and harder to suppress his identity. In order to reach that dream, it was necessary. Sponsorship for a medal contender required signing a morality clause. Inside he felt constrained and deceitful; he was not out to his teammates or competitors.

Following his gold medal in Barcelona, rumors that he was gay arose based on a Canadian tabloid article. His agent, while aware, never asked Mark. He denied the rumor, threatening to sue the publication, but nothing ever came of it. But Tewksbury's inner sense of self was suffering more and more.

While at University in Sydney, Australia, Mark outed himself via his senior paper. Sharing his experience as a gay athlete in a masculine sport won him an Academic Achievement award, and largely freed him of the internalized homophobia that had kept him closeted for years.

Then he and a few other athletes organized Olympic Athletes Together Honorably (OATH). Their goal was to force the IOC to live up to their professed mission. OATH managed – against fierce opposition from the IOC – to engage much of the world in this issue.

No longer welcome in the IOC, Tewksbury went on to engage with the Gay Games, then helped found the World OutGames, both developing world-class competition between gay athletes. During this period, he discovered that several of his competitors were also gay – and had been equally closeted during their most competitive years.

Interesting and very well written, this book relates one man's overcoming of his personal demons on the way to a satisfying and successful life. A good read.

Reviewed by Dave Parker