



Nick and Kia Basketball Series Eric Walters

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The Author

Eric Walters is an award-winning author whose years of experience as a teacher and basketball coach have inspired this series for young readers. Eric Walters lives in Mississauga, Ontario and is very much in demand for classroom presentations.

The Stories

#1 Three on Three

Nick and Kia are eager to sign up for the school's three-on-three basketball tournament. It's not going to be easy, however; they have to play against the older grades. So if Nick and Kia want to have any chance to win, the third player on their team will have to be Marcus, two grades above them and the best player in the school. But do three great players always make a great team?

#2 Full Court Press

Nick, Kia and their basketball-playing pals are back. Now it's time for tryouts for the school rep team. The question is, will grade three students Nick and Kia have any chance to make the team? After all, the rep team is traditionally made up only of grade five players. And if they do make the team, will their determination and hard work be enough to overcome the resentment of some of the other players? Can Nick and Kia convince their teammates that only teamwork will take them to the championship game?

#3 Hoop Crazy

Nick and Ned are cousins but as different as two boys born on the same day can be. And they don't get along. Nick cares mostly about sports and basketball is his passion. Ned is crazy about bugs and lives in a national park, three hours' drive from the nearest basketball court. As far as Nick is concerned, Ned is a nerd.

But when Nick and his pal Kia lose their teammates for the three-on-three tournament they're entered in, they must quickly find a way to make Ned a part of the team. This turns out to be more easily said than done.

#4 Long Shot

When Nick and Kia try out for the rep team they played for the previous year, they assume that they will make the grade. That is, until they meet the new coach. Suddenly, all their assumptions are thrown out the window. Coach Barkley, a former college star who missed out on a pro career due to injury, is a strict disciplinarian and his aggressive coaching techniques are a new experience for the kids.

The new coach expects near perfection and does not deal well with anything less. When he matches them up against a team of older players and then refuses to accept their loss, the kids begin to wonder if they even want to make this team. *Long Shot* is about the courage and leadership it takes to make difficult choices.

#5 Road Trip

Nick, Kia and their teammates are on the road, heading to an elite hoop tournament in the Mid-West. Feeling outmatched by many of the high-profile teams that have been invited from all over the world, the kids are still looking forward to a good time—hanging out and swimming in the hotel pool between games. However, Coach Barkley, who played his college ball in the area and is still regarded as a hero, has other ideas. As usual nothing but winning will be good enough for the coach.

Ideas for Discussion, Writing and Activities

- In *Three on Three*, Kia likes to collect basketball cards. What do you collect or what would you like to collect? Bring samples from your collection to share with the class and explain to them why what you collect is important to you.
- Do a unit of study around basketball as they do in *Three on Three*. Write a basketball poem, using a rhyming dictionary. (Try not to use the line “The ball is orange” because it is hard to rhyme with.)
- Run a three-on-three contest.

- In *Full Court Press*, Nick is reading *Silverwing* by Kenneth Oppel. Why do you think the author chose to have him reading that book? What do you think the other characters might choose to read during silent reading?
- Why do you think Eric Walters chose to end *Full Court Press* the way he did?
- In *Road Trip* the coach doesn't want the kids to swim before a game. Do you think it's true that swimming would weaken the children for basketball?
- What effect do you think the media involvement has on the outcome of *Road Trip*?
- What do you think happens after the ending of *Road Trip*? If it captures your imagination, write about the big game.
- Do basketball related math: develop questions involving distance, measurement, problem solving, money and probability. Exchange with other students and solve.
- Create your own version of Trivial Pursuit with basketball trivia questions.
- Investigate basketball-related websites: www.nba.com, www.raptors.com, etc.
- E-mail your favourite NBA or WNBA player.
- Do a basketball-related art piece. Fill your classroom or school with basketball art.
- How well does the author describe the game itself? Go to the gym and see if you can act out some of the plays. In *Full Court Press*, what could the other team do against the full court press? If you were the opposing team, how would you handle Nick and Kia's team?
- Nick puts up his hand on page 149 of *Road Trip*. What do you think happens next? If you think there is dialogue, write it.

Debatable: Write about or debate the following

- Rough play. Compare and contrast basketball with other sports in terms of violence. Consider Roy's behaviour in *Full Court Press*.
- Coaching. How tough is appropriate and how tough is too tough? What behavior in a coach brings out the best in the players and what just makes the whole experience miserable?
- Girls' and boys' teams. Should the best girls play on the boys' team? Or should there just be one team for all the best players, male and female? Or should the teams be determined by gender? What are the pros and cons of each option? Or would you recommend something else? See *Hoop Crazy* page 94, "Girls can be on a boys' team. Boys can't be on a girls' team for a three-on-three tournament."
- Point of view. How would these stories be different if they were told from Kia's point of view instead of Nick's? Rewrite a scene from Kia's point of view or write your own story about Walter's characters through Kia's eyes. Would you like to read a book in the series told by Kia?
- Teamwork. What makes a team a team? Alternatively, what are some things that in your experience undermine team spirit?

A Few Words from the Author

Dear Readers,

I love basketball. I love watching it. I love playing it. I love coaching it. And I love writing about it. There's a pace to the game, an excitement that starts with the tip-off and doesn't end until that final buzzer.

My basketball series has a special place in my heart—not only is Nick the main character, but he's also my son. He plays rep ball for the Mississauga Monarchs. Things that he and his teammates have experienced make their way into these books. And the teammates in the stories—Tristan, Jamie, David, Mark, Al and Jordan—are actually among my son's teammates.

I try to write these books to capture the essence of the game, but I also hope to tap into the more important issues in life. Things like not giving up, the importance of family, friends and teammates, trying your hardest, being honest and being a stand-up sort of person.

I hope you enjoy the adventures of Nick and Kia and follow them through some of their adventures. Then, I'd like you to go outside and put up a few shots!

Best wishes,
Eric Walters

Look for the next in the series: *Off Season*, published in Spring 2003.

For more information about Eric Walters, check his website:

www.interlog.com/~ewalters/