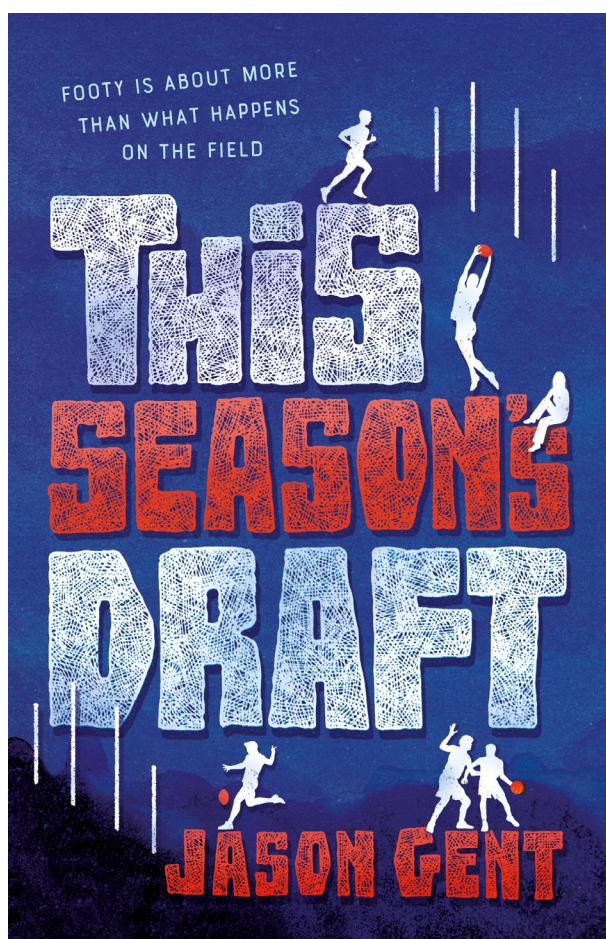


This Season's Draft

By Jason Gent



Set in the year leading up to the AFL Draft and following the experiences of six teenagers who are in its orbit, this YA novel is unique, compelling, authentic and full of footy. Perfect for sporty kids.

RECOMMENDED FOR

13 – 18 (Lower and Upper Secondary)

THEMES

Sport, AFL, footy, football, Draft, art, game design, grief, future, hope

ISBN (AUS)

9781761181696

SYNOPSIS

Summer. Winter. Autumn. Spring.

As the year unfolds, AFL footy season starts and the dreams of six teenagers play out on and off the field.

Elias. Team player. Running keeps him calm.

Zac and Fletcher. Best mates. Top 5 Draft picks?

Mason. Perfect practice with Dad makes perfect play.

Dane. Great footballer. Terrible boyfriend.

Beth. It's always been 'Dane and Beth'. What does 'just Beth' look like?

Plans unravel and life bounces in unexpected directions. A brilliant YA novel about coming of age, and the love of the game with all its triumph, heartbreak and hope.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

'I wrote *This Season's Draft* in three weeks, but I'd thought about writing it for twenty years. The idea was originally sparked after seeing the documentary, *The Draft*, which chronicled the draft of three AFL hopefuls, Des Headland, Adam Ramanauskas and Brendan Fevola.

'The three players had very different personalities and approached the Draft very differently. The fact they all went on to have memorable careers helped to remind me of the doco, and the idea of writing a YA story about it.

'I wrote this book for young men who are reluctant readers. Young men who want to see themselves in characters. Young men who have experienced a spectrum of adversity and are approaching their senior year of schooling. I wrote this book as an ode to football and the people's stories in that world. I wrote *This Season's Draft* for my teenage self.'

Jason Gent

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jason Gent is a Meanjin based writer. He studied Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT. During this time Jason had a short play performed by RMIT Union Arts, and helped to create a small press label, Rant, which released two anthologies. He has had a number of short stories published in Australian literary and poetry magazines. Jason is a member of Write Links. In 2021, Jason was shortlisted for the Glendower Awards for an Emerging Queensland Writer as part of the Queensland Literary Awards, for his YA verse novel, *On the Exhale*.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Define the term *verse novel* and describe whether you think *This Season's Draft* fits the definition. Did you enjoy the narrative approach taken by the author? How does it differ from a more traditional narrative style?
- Create a four-season storyboard from summer to spring. Write down what changes each character went through in each season. Add yourself to the storyboard and note how you have changed over the past four seasons - your opinions, perceptions, behaviours and sense of self.
- The term *mindset* refers to a set of beliefs that shape how you make sense of the world and yourself. Describe each of the main characters in the book according to the mindset they display and write a paragraph about how their mindset influences how they think and behave during the novel. Extension Question:

Discuss the difference between a fixed and growth mindset and consider which best describes you.

- Zac has been focussed on getting drafted as his endpoint. He says on page 222:

'We did it. We're finally here. It's over. It's just beginning.'

Write a letter from Zac to Fletcher when he's on the plane with time to reflect, outlining his excitement and fears about everything that's coming next.

- Write a scene from the perspective of Gracie. Make decisions about how she sees herself, Dane and the town in general. Consider what her future aspirations might be.
- Essay Question: How are sporting stars perceived in our society? Consider positives and negatives, including the various ways they are admired and how they are rewarded, the influence they may have, and the reasons they might be criticised. Consider if it is ever appropriate to boo or engage in online vitriol towards a sportsperson and whether or not this is something society, as a whole, needs to resolve?
- 'Confidence and arrogance: they're only words, you decide which one you are.' (page 50)

Discuss what you think is the difference between someone who is confident and someone who is arrogant. Can someone be both? How might you describe each main character at the beginning of the novel? Are they the same by the end?

Book Club Questions

1. Which character did you see yourself in? What was it exactly that you connected with?
2. Eli uses running to help process his thoughts. What do you do to help create a space for yourself and thoughts?
3. Did your perception of Dane change from Summer to Spring?
4. Consider a close friendship you have. Describe how you would feel if you knew you would be physically separated. How would you say goodbye?
5. What do you think each of the main characters will be doing a decade after the events of the novel?

