



# One Great Game: Two Teams, Two Dreams, in the First Ever National Championship High School Football Game

*Don Wallace*

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In the rich tradition of Friday Night Lights comes this heart-stopping account of the first ever national championship high school football game.

They said such a game was impossible. For 131 years, a No. 1 and a No. 2 high school team had never met -- though not for lack of trying. Then came October 6, 2001: two great teams, Concord De La Salle and Long Beach Poly, playing for all the marbles. Two contrasting cities, each upholding its vision of America. One thrilling game.

On the one side we find Concord, a wealthy, high-tech suburb in Northern California. De La Salle is private, nearly all white, and Catholic, with an astonishing nine-year, 113-game winning streak -- the longest of any team in any sport in history, amateur or professional. Coach Bob Ladouceur is a legend, and a mystic who demands perfection. The Spartans thrive on year-round training and a spirit of love. Critics call them a cult.

Long Beach is a gritty, mostly poor, Southern California seaport, the most diverse city in America. Poly High sends more players to the NFL than any other school, more students to the University of California, and alums such as Cameron Diaz and Snoop Dogg to stardom. Poly High is a beacon of public school excellence. But the Jackrabbits play in a fishbowl of high expectations and often excessive community scrutiny.

On both teams the young men are tested physically, mentally, spiritually, and most of all by the intense media spotlight on their behavior, skin color, SAT scores, economic class, and moral character. Would they crumble under the pressure? Can they withstand the lure of drug and supplement abuse while fighting off the distractions of college recruiters and rabid fans?

*One Great Game* takes us inside the schools and their teams, into the hearts and minds of the players, coaches, teachers, parents, and followers. Don Wallace spent a full year in their locker rooms and in their lives. The result is a powerful portrait not only of American high school sports but of two cultures that taken together define modern American life.



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