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The King of Swings: Johnny Goodman, the Last Amateur to Beat the Pros at Their Own Game (.)

Michael Blaine

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The inspiring, untold story of golf's most unlikely champion.

Like Cinderella Man and The Greatest Game Ever Played, The King of Swings tells a remarkable -- and universal -- underdog story. An orphan turned caddie from the Omaha stockyards, Johnny Goodman was considered too small, too foreign, and too poor to play the country club game. But he swore he would prove everyone wrong, and before a nation’s riveted gaze this self-taught kid from the wrong side of the tracks beat the legendary Bobby Jones in the nation’s first national golf tournament, held at Pebble Beach in 1929.

Against the backdrop of one of golf’s most majestic spots, these unlikely opponents played out in eighteen holes the class conflict that soon came to dominate American society with the onset of the Depression. Goodman’s victory sent shock waves through the rarefied world of golf in the Roaring Twenties and inspired millions of working-class Joes never to lose sight of their dreams.

But Goodman was just getting started. Against all odds, over the next several years he clung to his amateur status and battled the USGA at every turn, ultimately winning the 1933 U.S. Open, the last amateur ever to beat the professionals at their own game. With a keen sense of drama and a novelist’s eye, Michael Blaine brings the story of golf’s forgotten hero to life. He also explores the closing gap between amateur and professional sports and reawakens a particular moment in American history with exceptional grace and flair.

Atmospheric, suspenseful, and finely crafted, The King of Swings is an inspiring and moving tale about the possibility -- and the price -- of idealism.

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