

BOOKS

Former Detroit Lion writes encouraging book for kids

Can I Play, Too?

By K. Scott Conover
(Prator Publications, \$9.95)
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Inspiring story: Former Lion K. Scott Conover used his own experience as a child to write a story to help children face their problems.

As an offensive lineman for the Detroit Lions K. Scott Conover could be an intimidating presence.

But underneath the shoulder pads, Conover of Bloomfield Hills is a sensitive man whose early experiences as a child with leg braces has inspired this warm and encouraging book for children.

"Can I Play, Too?" follows the life of Teddy Watts from birth to freshman year in high school. Teddy has to wear leg braces to correct a pigeon-toed walk. In addition he's small for his age. This double whammy makes him the butt of other children's taunts and laughter.

But Teddy is not discouraged. A loving mother and two encouraging sisters help give him confidence in himself and resilience against the taunts of others. He is also encouraged by sensitive teachers and neighbors.

When Teddy wins a friend, Dudley, who is more handicapped than he is, he shows that he's learned compassion from his own experience. When Teddy grows his braces, has a dramatic growth spurt and becomes Ted, an accomplished basketball player, he doesn't forget the wisdom he's learned from the kindness of others.

It's a simple story, told directly and from the heart.

"It was inspired by my experience as a young boy. I wore orthopedic braces from the time I was 1-1/2 to 3 and stopped wearing them because my parents couldn't afford them anymore," Conover said.

Unlike Teddy, Conover was big for his age in height and weight. During his eighth grade year in

school, Conover joined the Pop Warner Football team for the first time but wasn't allowed to play in any games because he was overweight.

"I always stood out," said Conover, who played Purdue and was drafted by Lions in 1991. He quit in 1996.

"The book is part of Conover's concern for young people.

"I just wanted to inspire young people to pursue their aspirations. I've been working on motivating young people for the last seven or eight years. I wanted to do it in a different way than motivational speaking," he said.

Conover said he left the Lions at the same time as former coach Wayne Fontes when he was finally forced from the game by injuries. It gave him a chance to pursue his own aspirations as a writer and artist.

"This is not going to be the last book," Conover said.

He is currently working on a sequel to "Can I Play, Too?" featuring

tutoring Teddy's pal Dudley.

"I'm also an artist and I'm doing illustrations for these animated characters I've created. It's also more on the educational side. I've always wanted to do it. When I was young I was always drawing cartoon figures, but my athletic skills grew faster than my artistic skills," he said.

In 1994, Conover founded the Scott Conover Youth Foundation in his native New Jersey.

"We provide athletic and academic enrichment programs for all students and subsidize economically disadvantaged students," he said.

Though currently operating only in New Jersey, Conover said he would like to expand it to other areas.

Conover will be promoting his new book through motivational talks at area schools. He is also trying to get the book into area bookstores. It is currently available at Walden Books.

National Amusements Shawnee Cinema 2100 N. Dixie Ave. Between University & Watson Blvd. 248-375-2660 All Shows and 6 p.m. Continuous Show Daily Late Show Fri. & Sat. 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