Have you ever had a conversation with a coach or a player and listened to them describe the passion and love of the sport for which they coach or play? Christine A. Baker captures the passion and growth of women’s basketball in her book titled, *Why She Plays*. Through interviews with young girls, college athletes, WNBA players, and legendary coaches, as well as through her personal experiences, Christine Baker is able to capture an inside look at what drives girls and women to participate in sport. Baker provides wonderful insight into the growth and development of women’s basketball from high school, to college, to the WNBA, to USA basketball.

Baker begins with a youthful perspective on why girls play basketball. For example fifteen-year-old Janelle from New York loves the game because of “the feeling—knowing—that I helped contribute with one basket, the control of holding the ball, the satisfaction of knowing hours of practice have paid off with a great jump shot, and the ability to be aggressive and be rewarded for it” (p. 22).

Jody Conradt, former University of Texas women’s basketball coach, “believes the game of basketball creates a laboratory to develop lifelong skills, namely: focus, intensity, and a commitment to be diligent in pursuit of excellence” (p. 66). From a coaching perspective Conradt urges young female coaches not to allow anything to overshadow their passion for the game. She states, “It’s easy to become distracted, to allow other things to become priorities…but it is still about the love of the game. It’s about sharing the love that probably every coach once felt when she played” (p. 70).

Throughout the book, Baker provides numerous statistics and looks at trends in women’s basketball. Before Title IX approximately 300,000 girls participated in sports. Now, close to 3 million girls participate. Sports like basketball don’t only teach physical and tactical skills, they teach young girls about life. Baker states, “Had Title IX not been passed, these young women might never have learned life lessons basketball teaches. They might never have experienced how to be a leader or how to work hard, vital lessons for any high-school student to learn” (p. 38).

Baker does not only address women’s basketball from the players’ and coaches’ perspective but also from the perspective of the female consumer: “Nearly 50 million women avidly follow professional sports...women spend 80 percent of all sports apparel dollars...women composed about one-third of the adult audience for ESPN sport event programs...these statistics illustrate that women are already playing a major role as sports fans and as consumers” (p. 104).
From Title IX, to the birth of the WNBA, to Sports Marketing, to comparisons of USA basketball versus basketball in other countries, Christine Baker does a great job of combining her love for the game of basketball and her journalistic abilities to provide the reader with a well-rounded visual rendering of women’s basketball. As Becky Hammon, professional basketball player, states,

I do believe that any girl from any state, at any age, who picks up a basketball and has a dream, does so because it is fun. For me dreaming was fun. The countless hours spent alone in the gym were fun. On that court I developed my passion and love for the game of basketball along with my desire to improve myself each and every day. That’s the reason why I played and fell in love with this beautiful game. (xii forward)