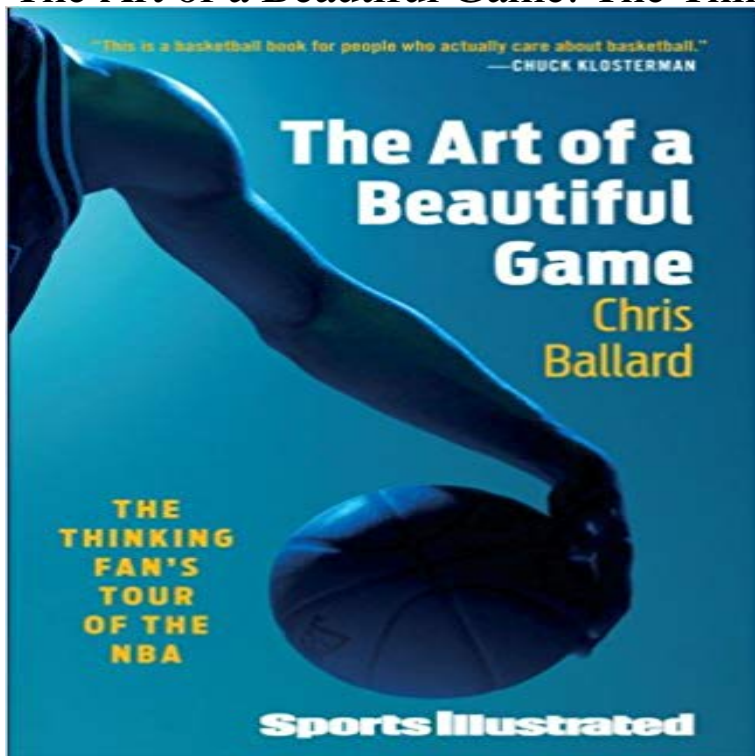


The Art of a Beautiful Game: The Thinking Fans Tour of the NBA



In *The Art of a Beautiful Game*, Chris Ballard, the award-winning Sports Illustrated writer who has covered the NBA for the past decade, goes behind the scenes to examine basketball in ways that will surprise even die-hard fans. An inveterate hoops junkie who played some college ball, Ballard sits down with the NBA's most passionate, cerebral players to find out their tricks of the trade and to learn what drives them, taking readers away from the usual sports talk radio fodder and deep into the heart of the game. Ballard talks to Dwight Howard, a prolific shot-blocker, about the enervating feeling of meeting another man at the height of his leap; challenges Steve Kerr to a game of H-O-R-S-E to understand the mentality of a pure shooter; reveals the roots of Kobe Bryant's unmatched killer instinct; and spends time with LeBron James to better understand both his mental game and his seemingly unlimited physical skills. He tracks down renowned dunkers from Dominique to Shaq to explore the impact of the dunk on the modern game, shadows Shane Battier during his preparations to defend LeBron, takes lessons from a freethrow shooting guru who once hit 2,750 in a row, and attends an elite NBA training camp to feel the pain that turns a prospect into a pro. Packed with lively characters and basketball history, and grounded in superb writing and the reportage that is the hallmark of Sports Illustrated, *The Art of a Beautiful Game* is an often witty, always insightful look at the men like Steve Nash, Yao Ming, and Alonzo Mourning who devote themselves to this elegant and complicated sport. It ultimately provides basketball fans what they all want: an inside read on the game they love.

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