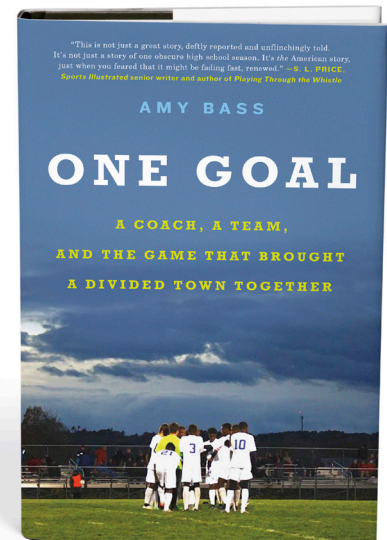


 hachette
BOOKS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ONE GOAL

AMY BASS



1. Consider *One Goal*'s epigraph, a statement by Ronaldinho: "When you have a football at your feet, you are free." What might this mean? In what various ways do the many stories throughout the book concern the idea of freedom? What are essential freedoms?
2. What is it about the game of soccer that makes it the most popular sport to play around the world? What might explain why baseball, football and basketball seem more popular in the United States, while soccer is thought of as "an outlier"? What are important differences between participating in a sport and simply being a spectator?
3. Bass states that the success of the Lewiston Blue Devils shows what happens "when America works the way it is supposed to." What does she mean? What cultural values are central to such success? What forces work against this original intent?
4. How is it that mistreated immigrants from only a generation ago, like many of the Quebecois in Lewiston, can be so critical of more recent immigrants like the Somali refugees? Why is such "an old story" so enduring?
5. Of the many valuable qualities of Coach Mike McGraw, which seem the most admirable? How is he able to connect so genuinely with students and players coming from such profoundly different experience? What in his experience might help explain his democratic values? Their consistency? His willingness and ability to evolve and adapt as he ages? How is it that changes in his life and community don't threaten these values but actually strengthen them?
6. Consider Lewiston's "coach of everyone," Abdullahi Abdi. What skills and qualities does he bring to the players and the program? What does he offer that McGraw cannot? Why is it important for him to be at each game? Why does he value "possession" soccer more than "direct" soccer? In what ways, outside of soccer, is he a mentor?
7. Considering Coach McGraw, Abdullahi Abdi, Abdijabar Hersi, Abdikadir Negeye, and players like Shobow Saban, Abdi H., and others, what are the various qualities of strong and effective leaders?
8. Why is it that "schools became the front line of the many transitions taking place" in Lewiston? How did Gus LeBlanc partner with ZamZam Mohamud to take on such a complex challenge?
9. Given the particular geographical, cultural, and familial complexity of their lives, how do the boys and girls cultivate an identity, a sense of who they are? What elements of life create or maintain the cultural identity served by organizations like SBYA/MEIRS and Trinity Jubilee?
10. How do various players on the team manifest or alter their unique personalities when on the pitch, in their game? What is particularly special about players like Abdi H., Moe, Maulid, Karim, and others both on and off the field?
11. What in particular does the life of Shobow Saban demonstrate about the immigrant experience? How is it that, as he learned as he learned first with his close friend Jonny McDonough, questions are "an important step in building bridges"?
12. Lewiston AD Jason Fuller says that without William "Kim" Wettlaufer the integrated soccer program "doesn't happen," that his "role and influence is monumental." What did Wettlaufer bring to the program and community at large? Why, unlike so many others in Lewiston, couldn't he and his wife Carolyn McNamara "look away" once they started watching Shobow and the others enliven and transform the soccer program?

13. What's the difference between "direct" or "kick and chase" soccer and "possession soccer"? Why was the latter style more appropriate for the new players at Lewiston? What might such a style of play suggest about solving complex personal and social problems in the community? What is "the advantage of the ball"?
14. Essential to the success of the team was the building of trust between the players on the field and between them and the coaches. How was trust built or earned in these various relationships? How did it manifest during practices and games? What qualities or behaviors were important to building trust with the players' families and within the larger community of Lewiston?
15. What is the significance of the Blue Devil's rallying cry "PAMOJA NDUGU!"? In what various ways, on the field and off, is it demonstrated?
16. What challenges beyond those of normal competition did the Blue Devils face? What responses were suggested or demanded by Coach McGraw, especially regarding unfair and even racist treatment? Is it always best to "ignore ignorance"? When, if ever, is some kind of retaliation necessary? What form should it take?
17. How does the team evolve over time, especially after its heartbreaking loss to Cheverus? What was necessary to transform them into a championship team?
18. When Maslah returns to the team, Abdi H. offers a powerful insight regarding teamwork when he says, "Trying to do your own thing is not as fun." Why is this? What does group success have or create that individual accomplishment doesn't?
19. Coach McGraw passionately defends the players on the bench, reminding the starters: "Don't you disrespect them...they are our all-stars sitting there." What does he mean? Beyond the players, who are the important all-stars, part of the "good, strong, deep bench" of the community?
20. What does the huge supportive crowd at the State Championship game reveal about the evolution of Lewiston? What is it about the team that seems to override animosity or bias in many people? How do sports in general offer an opportunity to gather seemingly disparate people? At what point can team loyalty become divisive?
21. What were particularly important moments in the championship game against Scarborough? How did the Blue Devils have to adapt in ways they hadn't all season? What was the significance of "YAKULAK!"? What effects might such a historic victory have had on each of the players personally?
22. Even in the spotlight as New England Coach of the Year, McGraw is "humble, giving credit to the kids and his assistants." Where does such humility come from? Why is it true that, as Bass states, "there just [aren't] a lot of Mike McGraws in the world"?
23. Despite the powerful and transformative success of the Lewiston Blue Devils, many in the community are still entrenched in racist beliefs and behaviors. Why is this? What are they attached to? Why does it often take decades or generations for such prejudice to fade?
24. After Lewiston's second State Championship two years later, Warsame offers the profound and simple statement "Soccer is life." What does this mean?

 **hachette**
BOOKS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ONE GOAL

AMY BASS

