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PEACHTREE  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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## Hardcourt Comeback

Written by Fred Bowen

PB: 978-1-56145-516-4  
Also available in e-book

Ages 7–12 | Realistic Fiction  
Fred Bowen Sports Stories Series  
AR • AC • Lexile • F&P • GRL R; Gr 4



### ABOUT THE SERIES

Fred Bowen’s fast-paced middle-grade stories offer readers themes of competition, cooperation, facing change, gender roles, overcoming challenges, and new experiences. In addition, they feature play-by-play action, snappy dialogue, and engaging plots. Bowen’s books are not the usual sports-fiction fare; each book loops in a little sports history and includes back matter with fascinating glimpses into that history and the heroes who made it happen.

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Brett is a star player on his basketball team...or at least he thought he was. Then he misses an easy layup at the buzzer that costs his team the game. And things get worse. At a friend’s party at a rock climbing center, Brett freezes on the wall. He’s losing his confidence fast, both on and off the court, and the championship game is coming. Can Brett overcome his fears and play like a winner again?

### THEMES:

Overcoming fear | Determination | Physical courage  
Phobias | Friendship Sports | Basketball  
Pro players who came back after public failures

### WRITING PROMPTS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

aligned with **Common Core Reading Standards**

#### DIRECTIONS

Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

#### CHAPTER 1

How would you describe the Wildcats basketball practice? What does it tell you about the players and the relationship between Brett and Will?

#### CHAPTER 2

How does the author use the History Bee to show the relationship between Brett and Brooke? Describe that relationship.

#### CHAPTER 3

What is a layup in basketball? Brett scores a key basket with a layup to make the score 43–38. Why all the emphasis on layups?

#### CHAPTER 4

You have read about Brett for four chapters. How would you describe him in three or four adjectives? Why did you choose those adjectives?

#### CHAPTER 5

How is the setting in chapter 5 important to the action? How does the author show that Brett is getting more and

more nervous? How is the word “beaten” used at the end of the chapter?

### CHAPTER 6

The author uses two chapters to describe the game with the Huskies. Why does he do this? How does it create more tension in the story?

### CHAPTER 7

This chapter describes only 45 seconds of the game. What does the author do to “slow down” the action?

### CHAPTER 8

How has Brett changed since the beginning of the story? How is he different? Why is he different?

### CHAPTER 9

How has Brett’s relationship with Will changed? How has it changed with Brooke?

### CHAPTER 10

Compare and contrast how Brett acts and plays during the game in this chapter and how he acts and plays during the game in chapter 3. What are some of the specific differences?

### CHAPTER 11

After the Wildcats practice, Brett sits on the gym floor to watch the start of his sister’s practice, but he barely notices what her team is doing. Why is that?

### CHAPTER 12

Coach Giminski tells the Wildcats two stories. Why is it important that these stories are about real games and real players?

### CHAPTER 13

What does Mike at Earth Treks do to help Brett overcome his fears? Compare Brett’s feelings at the end of this chapter with his feelings at the end of chapter 5.

### CHAPTER 14

What does Coach Giminski mean when he says to Brett, “Take it to the hoop”? Brett seems to be gaining confidence and playing better. How did Brett’s experience at Earth Treks help him as a basketball player?

### CHAPTER 15

Describe the rules for the game “21.” What are the two shots in the game? Why is that important to the story?

### CHAPTER 16

What does the game tell you about Brett? How has he changed?

### CHAPTER 17

Think about the whole story. Why do you think the book is called “Hardcourt Comeback”?

### OVERALL QUESTION

In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

### “THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION

How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?

### REVIEWS

“This entry in the Fred Bowen Sports Story series is flush with life lessons about perseverance, dedication, and picking oneself up after a hard knock, not to mention loads of on-court action.

It reads like a successful drive to the hoop—quick, purposeful, and effective.

—*Booklist*

“Bowen’s stories move along briskly with rapid-fire action sequences and end with surprising twists.

—*School Library Journal*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fred Bowen is the author of Peachtree’s popular Fred Bowen Sports Story series. A lifelong sports fanatic, he has coached youth league baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball. His kids’ sports column “The Score” appears each week in the KidsPost section of the *Washington Post*. Bowen lives in Maryland.

[www.fredbowen.com](http://www.fredbowen.com)

**Available in the  
Fred Bowen Sports Story series**

**BASEBALL:**

*Dugout Rivals*  
*The Golden Glove*  
*The Kid Coach*  
*Lucky Enough*  
*Perfect Game*  
*Playoff Dreams*  
*Throwing Heat*  
*T.J.'s Secret Pitch*  
*Winners Take All*

**FOOTBALL:**

*Double Reverse*  
*Quarterback Season*  
*Speed Demon*  
*Touchdown Trouble*

**BASKETBALL:**

*The Final Cut*  
*Full Court Fever*  
*Hardcourt Comeback*  
*Off the Rim*  
*On the Line*  
*Outside Shot*  
*Real Hoops*

**SOCCER:**

*Go for the Goal!*  
*Out of Bounds*  
*Soccer Team Upset*



PEACHTREE

Discussion Guide prepared by Peggy Jackson

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