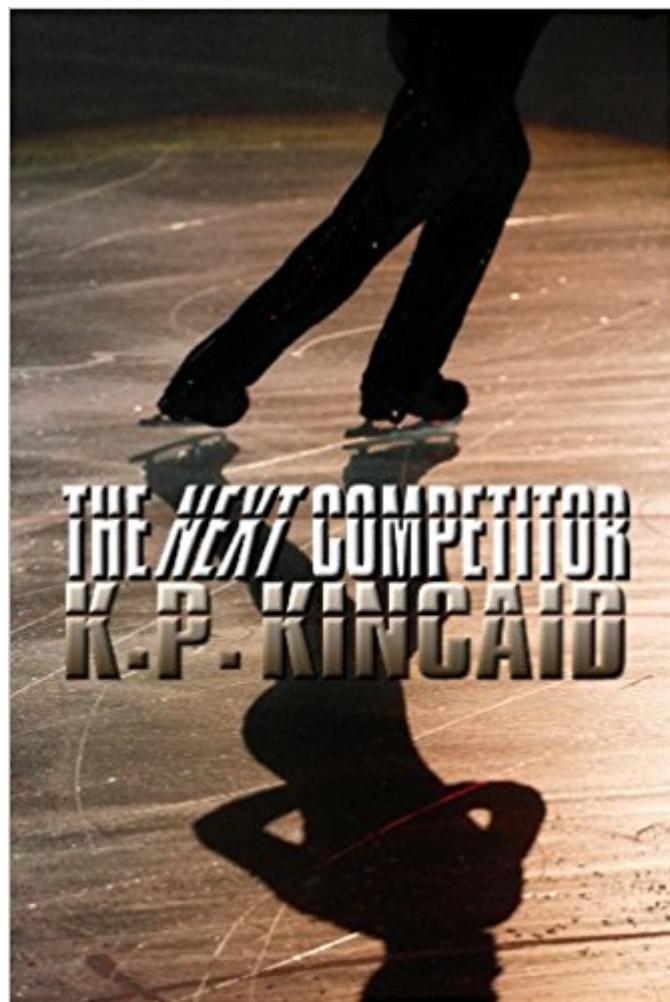


The book was found

The Next Competitor



Synopsis

It's the all-important Olympic season and eighteen-year-old American figure skater Alex Grady is discovering that there are many obstacles along the way on his quest to win a gold medal. For starters, he has to get through endless hours of practice under the watchful eye of his stern and slightly terrifying Russian coach. Then he has to contend with his all-American rival, Tanner Nielsen. Tanner has the talent, looks, poise and picture-perfect girlfriend that make him the ideal poster boy for United States figure skating. Alex has the talent and his looks aren't bad, but the filter between his brain and his mouth is missing, and he definitely doesn't have a girlfriend. He doesn't have a boyfriend either, although he finds himself thinking far too much about pairs skater Matt Savelli, which is ridiculous, since goody two-shoes Matt is totally not his type. Besides, Alex doesn't have time to worry about dating, not with the Olympics looming, right? Can he find a way to go for the gold and still remain true to himself?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Life of a skating star- I learned a lot from this book. One can only respect and applaud their dedication and accomplishments. May they all have HEA.

Good plot, satisfying resolution, enjoyable characters, not great writing. Not sure if I will read more.

So, I read this book for a book report in my 7th grade literacy class. I must say, this book was a fantastic book that I honestly could not put down. I literally read it in a day. Because I couldn't put it

down. I'm more in love with the main character's personality. Give it a try.

Can I say I love this book? Yes, I can. I also posted on iamaloserkidreviews.blogspot.com Alex is a great character; he has flaws and sometimes seems a bit oblivious. The only thing on his mind is skating. He needs to win his competitions, then Nationals and then of course the Olympics. So when a cute guy comes along, he doesn't know what to think. A relationship isn't an option! (even if the guy is cute and amazing) And how can he even like him? He pretty much dislikes everyone! Just like Tanner. He hates Tanner. Mostly because everyone else in the United States loves Tanner. About a quarter into the book something happens that will change Alex a bit as a person. An accident makes him realize what's important for him, but it's not a breakthrough moment. That moment actually happens at the Olympics. I think the progress he has made throughout the story is great and you can really see the change (though at some moments he falls back into old habits and yells and screams at everyone and just basically acts like a child throwing a tantrum). Another thing I love in this book are the foreign characters, for example Mrs. C (her real name is Elena Cheremisinova). Mrs. C is Alex' coach and from Russia and every time I read her lines, I hear this Russian accent in my head and that really has to do with how her lines are written. For example: You are very foolish boy --- Say you won't be stupid boy again. Skate America is in two weeks. You will say only nice things to reporters. Another foreign character is Kenny, who is Japanese and always bows when thanking people. The way he speaks also feels very Japanese to me, so I really think the writer did a tremendous job on this. These characters just really grew on me and I just think it is such a great story with great characters. It is not as predictable as I thought it would be, which is another bonus point and it also isn't a book filled with only dialog. I just wish I knew more of figure skating beforehand, because when all the jumps were mentioned, I didn't have a clue what it looked like!

Being the best isn't easy, something eighteen-year-old Alex Grady knows only too well. Taking place in the world of professional figure skating, this is a vivid account of competing at the highest level. It leads the reader through Alex's highs and lows, from the grueling training sessions and constant bruises, to the adrenaline rush that comes with performing for a crowd, as we follow him on his quest to win big at the Olympics. Alex is single-minded, confident in his ability, and often too self-centered to spare a thought for those around him. Still, he needs to be if he's going to overcome the obstacles that stand between him and Olympic gold. For starters there's his arch-rival Tanner Nielson, the nation's favorite with his golden looks and perfect girlfriend. Alex has beaten him once,

but can he do it again when it counts? Most challenging of all though is the quad, the one jump he just can't seem to master, and which he's sure will make or break his Olympic chances. If the pressure Alex puts on himself takes much of the enjoyment out of competing, it's a price worth paying. He has his sights set on the prize and nothing will get in his way. When, during training, Alex's eyes are increasingly drawn to pairs skater Matt Savelli, he's confused. Matt might be good-looking, but he's not his type. He's too steady, too serious. Then an accident on the ice brings the two boys together, and Alex discovers there's more to Matt than he first supposed. Before he realizes what's happening, he finds himself falling in love. But the timing is all wrong. There's no room in his life right now for a boyfriend, not with the upcoming Olympics consuming every ounce of his energy. Pushing Matt away seems the only choice if he's to maintain his focus. What he doesn't count on is the gaping hole Matt's absence creates in his heart. Is there any way he can win back Matt and still go for gold? This is a poignant and often humorous story about pursuing a dream, and discovering that, sometimes, winning doesn't have to be everything. Alex's voice shines through every word, and I totally fell in love with him, for all his arrogant self-absorption. The author's knowledge of figure skating and the Olympic process impressed me greatly and really brings the narrative to life. Not that I believe you need to be a fan of skating, or indeed of sport in general, to appreciate this novel. Anyone who enjoys a good teen romance, and who has ever worked hard to achieve a long-cherished ambition, will surely identify with Alex and his struggles.

I loved this book. To be honest, from the book description I thought Alex would be too similar to Johnny Weir, but he wasn't like him at all. There are a few surface details that seemed similar, but they could apply to many other skaters over the years, too. I quickly forgot about real life and was invested in Alex and Matt's romance and in the outcome of their competitions. The build-up of tension in both their relationship and training leading to the Olympics was very compelling and dramatic. The writing was excellent. I loved Alex's POV and that he was a change of pace from the usual novel hero. He was realistic and original and I rooted for him even when he made mistakes. I hope there's a sequel!

""Victory depends on four and a half minutes on ice. Life cannot." I think what impressed me so much with this book, which is superlative, is it does what every great YA should do, which is speak to a deeper message. The hero starts off unlikeable and obsessed only with winning but as the story progresses he finds love and through love, he lightens up a bit. He begins to care about his teammates, he finally enjoys skating again. There is a lot of pressure in our world to be number one,

but to be number two or three can be pretty good if you have what matters most.

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