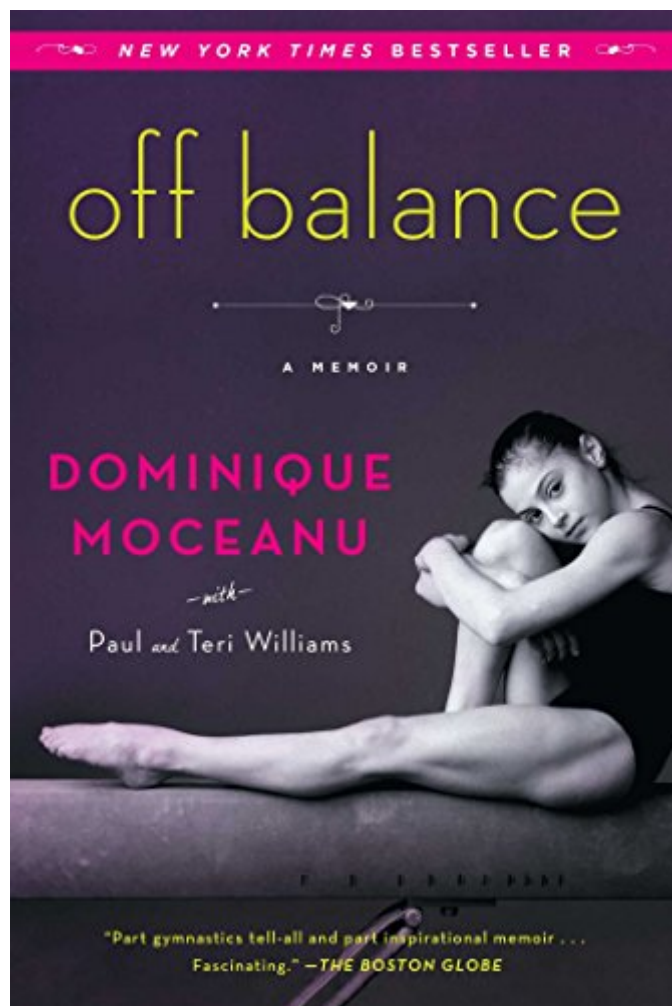


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# Off Balance: A Memoir



## Synopsis

In this searing and riveting New York Times bestseller, Olympic gold medalist Dominique Moceanu reveals the dark underbelly of Olympic gymnastics, the true price of success—and the shocking secret about her past and her family that she only learned years later. At fourteen years old, Dominique Moceanu was the youngest member of the 1996 US Women's Olympic Gymnastics team, the first and only American women's team to take gold at the Olympics. Her pixyish appearance and ferocious competitive drive quickly earned her the status of media darling. But behind the fame, the flawless floor routines, and the million-dollar smile, her life was a series of challenges and hardships. *Off Balance* vividly delineates each of the dominating characters who contributed to Moceanu's rise to the top, from her stubborn father and long-suffering mother to her mercurial coach, Bela Karolyi. Here, Moceanu finally shares the haunting stories of competition, her years of hiding injuries and pain out of fear of retribution from her coaches, and how she hit rock bottom after a public battle with her parents. But medals, murder plots, drugs, and daring escapes aside (all of which figure into Moceanu's incredible journey), the most unique aspect of her life is the family secret that Moceanu discovers, opening a new and unexpected chapter in her adult life. A mysterious letter from a stranger reveals that she has a second sister—born with a physical disability and given away at birth—who has nonetheless followed in Moceanu's footsteps in an astonishing way. A multilayered memoir that transcends the world of sports, *Off Balance* will touch anyone who has ever dared to dream of a better life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A memoir is the story of a person's life and their experiences and no one should be entitled to review that. Accordingly, this review focuses only on how the information is presented and whether the audience of potential buyers would take an interest in it. As fans of celebrities we pick up on a person during or after their major achievements. In the case of Moceanu (for most) this would be 1996 when she and the U.S. Woman's team won a gold medal in the team competition for gymnastics. She was just 14 years old. I assumed it took a lot of hard work to get there, and that the path was not easy. I also assumed that it was a childhood lost and replaced with the hard work and determination of an adult. This book certainly confirms these theories. I feel I can write this without it being a real spoiler for anyone. We (the public) see the glorious results and have some appreciation for how difficult it is to achieve the results, but no true understanding. This memoir humanizes Moceanu's achievements and it does it in an incredibly well thought out and touching way. For example, most fans knew her family was Romanian - but probably few considered what that truly meant. It meant that Moceanu is a first generation American who came from a poor family of immigrants... a family which had a financially unsteady situation. It may be hard enough to achieve greatness, but it is even harder living in a two-bedroom apartment with your parents, sister and grandparents. Most great gymnasts tend to be on the small side, but have any fans considered what it is like to be the smallest person in your class selected last to play a sport in gym class, have a funny sounding name and come to school with food that is unlike your classmates' food at lunch time? No one imagines the small tiny hardships that add up to a difficult life when they see a girl and a gold medal on a podium in front of the entire world. This memoir helps you to relate to Moceanu as a human - a young girl who faced kids in school as cruel as the ones you went to school with, but she faced them with much more adversity than most of us did in our own lives. It is a poorly kept secret that elite child athletes often face abuse (which comes in multiple forms: physical, mental, emotional). Gymnastics seems to be particularly notorious for this. What I appreciate about this memoir is that it reads like someone trying to tell a story as a way of explaining their life... and not like someone who has an ax to grind. Many memoirs are "grinding axes" in disguise, but fortunately this does not come off as one of them in my opinion. Moceanu does a great job reflecting on what

was great in her childhood and what she appreciated about her life as well as noting things she has set out to change about her own children's childhood. It also brings an additional remarkable component about her lost sister and how the discovery altered everything she knew and perceived about her family which, frankly, was already enough for ten lifetimes! If I had one criticism of the book it is the way in which the chronology was broken up to weave past and current together (i.e. the story of her lost sister). It was awkward to follow and I think the reader's feeling of being disjointed outweighed what Moceanu was probably going for by doing it. This is a small issue mentioned only because no product review should fail to mention "the negative". The story is remarkable and inspiring, there is no question of that. It is told well and with great detail that takes a lot of courage to share with other human beings (let alone publish in a book). You do feel that you are a better person for having understood the path someone else experienced in life and the challenges they faced and the lessons they learned. You can not ask for more after reading a memoir. Highly recommended.

I got into Gymnastics a couple of weeks before, and I got delightful for Dominique, her performances and story, and I really got more interested in it. So I decided to buy her book, to know more about her story and herself, and I have to say I really fulfilled my expectations about it. It's a captivating book, very dynamic and full of details, no letting any hole between. I really loved the book. There were times I couldn't stop reading at very late hours at night, and I had to force myself to go to sleep to continue the next day. I felt I could know Dominique much better than talking face to face with her and I'm really thankful to her for letting me and others know her more, by sharing their feelings, emotions, thoughts and the most toughest moments that she had to face on these years of her life. I have a lot of more things to say, yet to keep this comment brief I want to say that I admire you for being such a great person and fighter. Thank you very much for this!

Who is anyone to judge a memoir? It's the sole story of one's life behind the scenes, camera's, and spotlight. The fact that Dominique could be so brave and honest knowing she would be shunned by crooked people in her sport's governing body is truly admirable. She has come out of all of her trials and tribulations a good person and it is truly an unbelievable testament to her character. The truth is nobody can judge the hardships of this person's life unless you've walked a mile in their shoes. Reading those mean-spirited reviews made by ignorance and lack of understanding of one's life just because someone doesn't like a person make those reviews seem extremely biased, heartless and unintelligent, and plain mean but hey you're entitled to your stupidity. They certainly don't reflect an

accurate depiction of this book. Showing one's support for the things she went through is what's truly important, and offering the courage for people to not be scared to speak their truths is also equally as most important. I feel she does support this and in light of what USAG is currently going through with abuse at the forefront in the media, she must be telling a whole lot of the truth...There's never a reason to doubt her stories because they happened to her personally and none of us were ever there, so I support this book for her courage, strength, determination, perseverance, kind-heartedness, and compassionate heart, because she forgave those that hurt her somehow and some way, and is living a triumphant life now. All things to be applauded...BRAVO Dominique!

I am a former elite gymnast and I was very hesitant to read this book because of how the media had skewed Dominique Moceanu (DM) image. The bratty, confident gymnast who grew up to be outspoken about how awful gymnastics is. Well, I didn't believe that fully of course but after reading this book I have a different type of respect for her. Her life is incredible and it is so amazing to me that she turned out to be such a normal young lady with a beautiful family. I was especially intrigued with how she told the story about Bela and Martha. I am ashamed now to know that Martha is now the face fo USA Gymnastics. Like she said, the way things are run is un-American and more people need to speak up. She is so courageous to write this Memoir but I am so happy that she did. After everything that has happened I hope that she continues to have a blessed and beautiful life with her family.

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