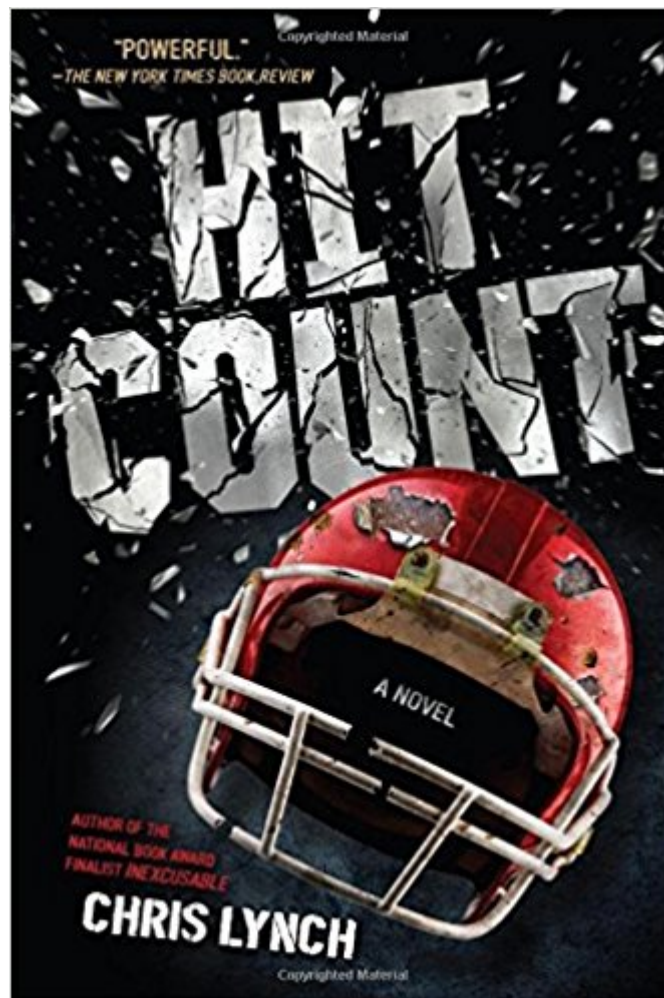


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# Hit Count



## Synopsis

“I hit him so hard, the clash of helmets and pads sounded like a gunshot across the field. I crushed him with the hit, held on to him and crushed him again when I slammed him into the ground . . . I had arrived.” Arlo Brodie loves being at the heart of the action on the football field, getting hit hard and hitting back harder. Arlo’s dad cheers him on, but his mother quotes head injury statistics and refuses to watch games. Arlo’s girlfriend tries to make him see how dangerously he’s playing; when that doesn’t work, she calls time out on their relationship. Even Arlo’s coaches begin to track his hit count, ready to pull him off the field when he nears the limit. But for Arlo the winning plays, the cheering crowds, and the adrenaline rush are enough to convince him that everything is OK--in spite of the pain, the pounding, the dizziness, and the confusion. “Powerful.” The New York Times Book Review “Sharp.” Sports Illustrated “Heart-pounding.” Washington Independent Review of Books “A powerful provocative look at the dark side of popular sports and their potential cost.” Publishers Weekly “This unflinching examination of the price of athletic power with plenty of bone-crunching play-by-play action, is both thought-provoking and formidable.” The Horn Book Magazine   
 A Booklist 2015 Top Ten Sports Books for Youth A Junior Library Guild Selection

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up “Arlo Brodie’s devotion to football progresses throughout his high school years, even as evidence mounts that repeated head injuries are affecting him both cognitively and

emotionally. In four sections that correspond to the four years of high school, Arlo describes the manner in which the sport gradually becomes an obsession, driving him to train incessantly and take ever greater risks in practice and games. He ignores the warnings of his mother, his girlfriend, and his own body until he is forced to confront his violent nature after grabbing his girlfriend during an argument in school. Comparisons are sure to be made with the author's groundbreaking *Inexcusable* (S. & S, 2005). Readers expecting the intense, concentrated focus of the earlier book, however, may be disappointed in this more diffuse effort, which features, for instance, a never-resolved subplot involving Arlo's jealousy of an older guy he thinks his girlfriend may be seeing. The novel also has some issues in terms of voice and narrative arc. In the first section, the 14-year-old Arlo comes across as entirely too erudite and sophisticated for a freshman, and the entire final section seems confusing as Arlo takes up boxing, of all things, to substitute for the football he has had to abandon because of his head trauma. His motivation for doing so is never sufficiently explained and the closing chapters are likely to leave readers scratching their heads.

**VERDICT** An intriguing work that raises troubling questions about the culture of violence in American high school sports. —Richard Luzer, Fair Haven Union High School, VT --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

—“A powerful story that illuminates both the dangers of head trauma in athletes and the psyche of football players.” —The New York Times Book Review —“Head injury debate becomes real life for [a] teen baller. . . action and sharp writing.” —Sports Illustrated —“The strength of this hard-hitting novel is how well award-winning author Chris Lynch portrays the drive and hunger of young football players . . . This intense timely story provides incredible insight as to why knowledge of football's potential danger is not enough to keep young players from taking the field.” —Kirkus Reviews —“An important work that raises troubling questions about the culture of violence in American high school sports.” —School Library Journal —“This unflinching examination of the price of athletic power, with plenty of bone-crunching play-by-play action, is both thought-provoking and formidable.” —The Horn Book —“Lynch offers a powerful, provocative look at the dark side of popular sports and their potential cost, using Arlo as a cautionary, even tragic tale. Arlo's rise and fall is handled skillfully, allowing readers into the self-destructive, self-deceiving mindset of an addict without condemning him.” —Publishers Weekly —“Fledgling football players should read this of-the-moment young-adult novel.” —All You Magazine —“After reading *Hit Count* by Chris Lynch, I wanted to kiss the

head of my STEM-loving 15-year-old son, who likes to watch football but has never been a player. Hit Count is a tough-love YA novel from an award-winning author about the personal stakes involved with high-school football . . . Hit Count takes a much-debated topic and turns it into a heart-pounding, entertaining young adult read. —*Washington Independent Review of Books* —“Arlo’s voice is objective and clear-headed, implying that his addled brain has been set to rights, but it carries the bittersweet memory of real joy in the mayhem he caused and punishment he endured throughout his short-lived career. It’s that honesty that will ring true with fans and players, perhaps for that moment just before they toss the book aside with a *‘Won’t happen to anybody I know.’* —*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* —“Arlo’s voice is objective and clear-headed, implying that his addled brain has been set to rights, but it carries the bittersweet memory of real joy in the mayhem he caused and punishment he endured throughout his short-lived career. It’s that honesty that will ring true with fans and players, perhaps for that moment just before they toss the book aside with a *‘Won’t happen to anybody I know.’* —*BCCB* —

My nephew read this book in a day or two and loved it. He loves football and enjoyed this book.

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Well- written

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review. Hit Count is a book that I think a lot of my high school guy readers (and reluctant readers) are going to enjoy. There is a lot of actual football game time and training time in this book. I read it in an afternoon, so the 300+ pages are easy pages. This book follows Arlo throughout his high school football career and it was pretty interesting to see the evolution. Arlo is a pretty smart guy, but the high he gets from the game robs him of a lot of his judgement. Subplots about Arlo’s clearly disturbed older brother (he was freaky ominous) and friendship in the face of ego gave depth to the story. I particularly liked Arlo’s relationship with his girlfriend. It seemed like a genuine affection, and it wasn’t all about what she could do for him. I don’t know if I’ve seen a relationship like this before from a guy’s perspective, and while it is just a small part of the book, it was engaging and a positive example of love. While there is a clear lesson about the danger involved in contact sports and head injuries, it isn’t

pedantic. I think the approach means my students will be drawn in by the action, but they will hang around long enough to benefit from the themes. While I thought this was a surprisingly strong book for the genre, I did have a few problems. I didn't like the ending, though it was satisfactory enough. I also struggled with the humor, which was sometimes laced with enough malice that I wasn't sure it was humor. My husband, the football coach, feels that some of the drama of the team dynamic was exaggerated, but hey, there is no fight club, right? Overall, I'm going to be very excited to add this to my classroom library because all of my Dueker and Green are well worn, and I struggle to find sports books for guys who read most of them in middle school. Language and situations are appropriate for grades 9+.

It is a gift for my grandson.

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