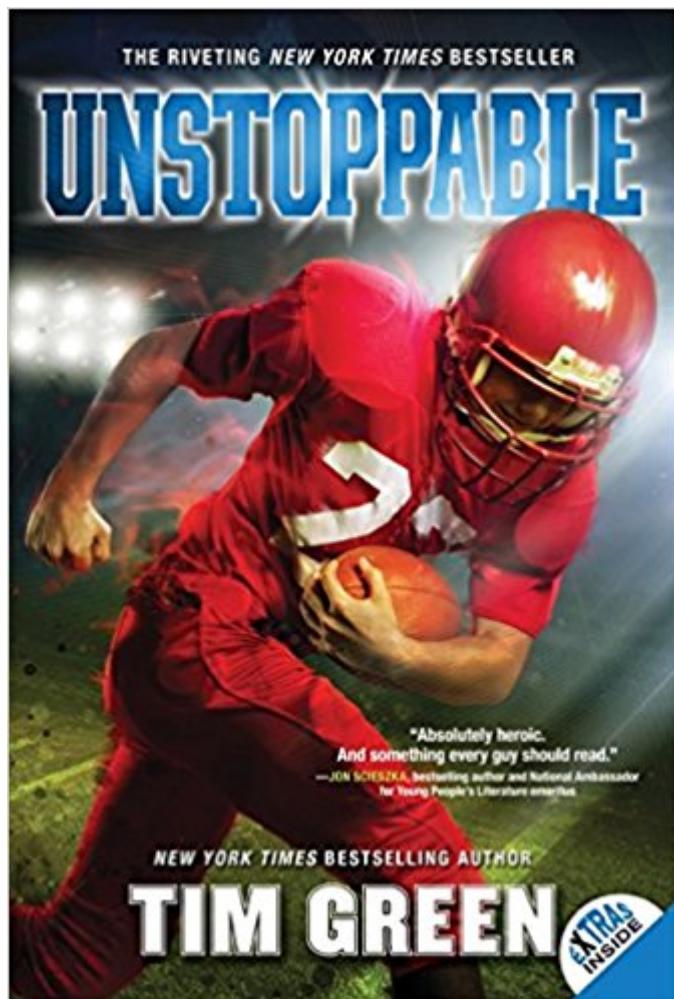


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# Unstoppable



## **Synopsis**

New York Times bestselling author Tim Green has written an unforgettable story "inspired by interviews with real-life cancer survivors and insider sports experience" showing a brave boy who learns what it truly means to be unstoppable. "Absolutely heroic, and something every guy should read." (National Ambassador for Young People's Literature emeritus Jon Scieszka) If anyone understands the phrase "tough luck," it's Harrison. As a foster kid in a cruel home, he knows his dream of one day playing in the NFL is a long shot. Then Harrison is brought into a new home with kind, loving parents—his new dad is even a football coach. Harrison's big build and his incredible determination quickly make him a star running back on the junior high school team. On the field, he's practically unstoppable. But Harrison's good luck can't last forever. When a routine sports injury leads to a devastating diagnosis, it will take every ounce of Harrison's determination not to give up for good.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 730 (What's this?)

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Best Sellers Rank: #21,709 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Football #26 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #34 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health > Diseases

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Gr 4-8-Harrison has spent his youth passed from one foster home to another. When he is rescued from an abusive couple and placed with the Kellys, things seem almost too good. Mr. Kelly is the JV football coach at Harrison's new secondary school, and Mrs. Kelly is a lawyer. They have always

wanted a child of their own, and soon Harrison is calling her "Mom" and playing on Coach's team. In spite of his lack of football experience, he proves unstoppable on the field when he gets the ball in his hands. Not all of his teammates are happy about their new 13-year-old star, and when Leo intentionally injures him during a practice, it just makes Harrison more determined to play. The knee injury doesn't get better, though, and an MRI shows much more than a torn ligament: suddenly, Harrison is being treated for bone cancer. He goes through surgery, requiring the amputation of part of his leg, and then chemotherapy, and he vacillates between depression and anger. Helping him through it are Coach and Mrs. Kelly, as well as Coach's old Army buddy, Major Bauer, who lost a leg in the Gulf War. Even when Harrison wants to push his friends away, they rally around him, and he allows himself to dream of playing football again, inspired by real-life athlete and amputee Jeff Keith. In short chapters with cliff-hanger endings, Green clearly shows the difficulties that the teen overcomes, and the truly unstoppable spirit that resides within him. While the dialogue can be a little mawkish, this is a hopeful story that Green's fans will enjoy.-Kim Dare, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

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With a sharp intensity fueled by both wrenching events and the main character's white-hot core of rage, Green sends an abused foster kid blasting his way through daunting challenges on and off the football field. Thirteen-year-old Harrison is caught by surprise when his fifth set of foster parents turn out to be a loving couple. Though justifiably suspicious of this change of fortune, he not only makes new friends at school but finds a channel for his temper in the school football team coached by his new foster father. So overwhelmingly fast, strong, and brutal is Harrison that he even intimidates his own team members. But his dream of NFL glory is cut short when an MRI on a knee injury reveals bone cancer advanced enough to require amputation. With coaching from both a hard-nosed disabled vet and an indomitable young fellow patient, Harrison sets his sights not just on rehabilitation but a return to the gridiron. Unlike Green's previous novels, the game action largely stays in the background, while Harrison's ferocious struggles with inner demons and physical obstacles make absorbing reading. Grades 5-8. --John Peters --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Harrison, a young boy endures a life that would break the spirit of many people, but that is not his way. Harrison grew up with a mother who had an addiction to alcohol. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon thing, but the severity in Harrison's situation is too great to handle. The severity

of Harrison's mother's alcoholism made her unfit for care for and raise Harrison any longer. This causes Harrison to move in with a foster family. Harrison had went through multiple foster homes until he was step up with the Constable family. A farming family who used their children as laborers around the farm. As if the hard work on the farm was not enough, Mr. Constable was an abusive man. Harrison could handle the hard work on the farm, but would only take the abuse for so long. There was one time when Mr. Constable hit Harrison in the eye with a belt, which caused permanent damage to look of Harrison's eye. This event caused Harrison to then kill Mr. Constable with a pitchfork, which was later determined to be "accidental". It was time for Harrison to move on again, but this time things would be different. The social worker assigned to Harrison had a daughter and son-in-law looking to adopt. Harrison's new foster father was a middle school football coach. Harrison has always longed to play football, but was unable due to outside circumstances. Harrison's size and built up aggression made him quite a successful football player. Not everyone was a fan of Harrison's new found passion for football. A couple of boys for his new school, Leo Howard and Adam Varnett, made fun of Harrison because he was adopted and his severely damaged eye. Harrison would make a best friend, Becky Smart, who stood up for him. Harrison continued to grow and play football, he was the starting running back, a position many players strived to play. One day at practice, Harrison took a hit to the knee that would cause him some pain, and cause Harrison to need to get his knee examined by a doctor. The doctor examined Harrison's knee, and discovered that he has bone cancer in this knee. To prevent the spread of the bone cancer, Harrison's leg was to amputated above the knee. This was a huge shot to Harrison's football future. This caused Harrison to feel down. His foster father saw this and called up an old friend, Major Bauer. Major is instrumental in Harrison's return to football. Major trained Harrison to become functioning and operational with this prosthetic leg. Though Harrison's return to football only involved him playing on special teams, he was still joyed because his return proved that he was unstoppable. This reminded me of a recent story in college football. James Conner, the starting running back at the University of Pittsburgh, was sidelined with a season ending knee injury a year ago. After an MRI was conducted to see the damage in his knee, it was discovered that he had Hodgkin's Lymphoma. James Conner, like Harrison was in for a much larger battle. James went through treatments and after an intense offseason, he returned to play for the University of Pittsburgh this year and has been a featured player in their offense. I read this book because I saw it had to do with the sport of football, and I believed its message would be transferable to other sports and all corners of athletics. It is an inspiration story of a young boy who

wants to do something he is passionate about regardless of the obstacles he faces.

The book, *Unstoppable* by Tim Green is about a Pennsylvania kid who had a rough childhood. Harrison Johnson is the main character; a thirteen year old boy who is nicknamed "Mud". Harrison has always been big for his age, which came with its advantages and disadvantages. Harrison was in and out of different foster homes throughout his childhood. He never knew his father. His Mother, Melinda Johnson, was a drug addict who showed up late to a court hearing, so Harrison was forced to stay at a foster home in which the foster parents, the Constable's, were abusive and cruel. Their foster home was on a farm, which meant there was constant work that needed to be done. By demand of Mr. Constable, Harrison was constantly doing chores and missing out on doing the thing he loved most: playing football. He was in love with football; most of the time while living with the Constable's, he was unable to even watch it on television. Although there were other kids who lived on the farm, like Lump, Crab, Flossy, and Dora, Mr. Constable was the hardest on Harrison. He would sometimes beat him very hard with his belt if Harrison misbehaved or lied. Since Harrison was a bigger kid, he sometimes felt that he could fight back when Mr. Constable was punishing him. For instance, Harrison once accidentally stabbed him in the leg with a pitchfork to defend himself from getting a beating. Mr. Constable trembled from the stabbing and fell over the ledge in the barn, hitting his head. He would end up dying from the significant blow to head, adding to the mess of Harrison's life. Even though Harrison was then abusively punished by Mrs. Constable, he had the chance to move to a different foster home. His mother ended up dying, so he had no choice but to live with more strangers. His next foster family was much better; he lived with the Kelly family. Ron Kelly (goes by Coach) was a middle school English teacher and football coach, and his wife, Jennifer Kelly, was a lawyer. They were much more sweet, and supportive of Harrison. They treated him well, helped him with school, and took him fishing. Not only was Harrison being treated better, he was also finally able to live out his dream and play football for his new school since Mr. Kelly became the new coach. However, he had to promise to stay out of trouble if he was to be on the team. Since Harrison was new to football, he initially struggled to learn the basics. But since he was big for his age, he naturally thrived at the game. He was referred to as "Unstoppable" because he was a huge force as a running back on the field. He became acclimated to his new school and did make friends like Justin, with whom he had a job with, and Becky Smart. However, he still faced some hardships; some students, especially one named Leo Howard, bullied Harrison every chance that he got. Leo's Father was a lawyer, so Harrison was worried that he would attempt to get Harrison in trouble for Mr. Constable's death and ultimately not allow him to play football anymore.

Harrison faced more trouble when he refused to sit down in class if the Math teacher did not address him by his actual name. He was sent to the principal's office but the discipline ended there. Although Harrison did not play in the team's first game, he dominated in practice and other games. A huge turning point in the story was when Harrison became injured while playing football. At first, they believe it is just a knee injury, but further diagnosis reveals that he actually had bone cancer. He is told that he has to have part of his leg removed, which terrifies Harrison. Going through chemotherapy and depression, Harrison is not sure if he will ever again play the sport he loves. His family, friends, and school show him great support. Mr. Kelly attempts to inspire Harrison by letting him meet his friend, Major Bauer, who had a leg removed from war. Ultimately, Harrison fights through the odds and makes it back on the football field by playing special teams, showing great strength and will. He proves to everyone around him that anything is possible and to never give up on your dream, no matter the odds.

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