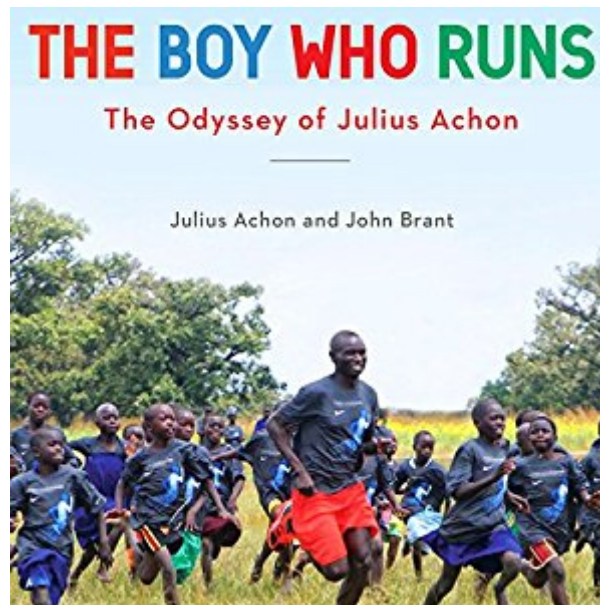


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The Boy Who Runs: The Odyssey Of Julius Achon



Synopsis

In the tradition of Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* by way of Christopher McDougall's *Born to Run*, this is the inspirational true story of the Ugandan boy soldier who became a world-renowned runner, then found his calling as director of a world-renowned African children's charity. "Julius can't remember who first saw the men. He heard no warning sounds - no dog barking or twig snapping. Until this point, events had moved too swiftly for Julius to be afraid, but now panic seized him. In another instant he realized that his old life was finished." Thus begins the extraordinary odyssey of Julius Achon, a journey that takes a barefoot 12-year-old boy from a village in Northern Uganda to the rebel camp of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, where he was made a boy soldier, and then, miraculously, to a career as one of the world's foremost middle-distance runners. But when a devastating tragedy prevents Julius from pursuing gold at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, he is once again set adrift and forced to forge a new path for himself, finally finding his true calling as an internationally recognized humanitarian. Today Julius is the director of the Achon Uganda Children's Fund, a charity whose mission is to improve the quality of life in rural Uganda through access to health care, education, and athletics. While pursuing his destiny, Julius encounters a range of unforgettable characters who variously befriend and betray him: the demonic Joseph Kony, a "world-class warlord"; John Cook, a brilliant and eccentric US track coach; Jim Fee, an American businessman who helps Julius build a state-of-the-art medical center deep in the Ugandan bush; and finally Kristina, Julius' mother, whose own tragic journey forms the pivot for this spellbinding narrative of love, loss, suffering, and redemption. Written by award-winning sportswriter John Brant, *The Boy Who Runs* is an empowering tale of obstacles overcome, challenges met, and light wrested from darkness. It's a story about forging your true path and finding your higher purpose - even when the road ahead bends in unexpected directions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When we watch the Olympics this week, or anytime we watch coverage of a major marathon or track event, it's hard not to notice the dominance of African runners. Unless you have some reason not to, you might assume you know their stories, and assume that their stories are all pretty much the same. In some ways, Julius Achon fits the stereotype of the African runner who quickly rises to the ranks of world-class athletes. But as John Brant writes in *The Boy Who Runs: The Odyssey of Julius Achon*, Achon's story diverges from the stereotype in many ways. Achon grew up in the tiny village of Awake, in northern Uganda. His family was so poor they couldn't afford a plastic jerrycan to fetch water. Julius used to run away from school when the teacher asked him to pay his school fees. He expected that he might join the army or the police, or, more likely, become a farmer like his dad. When Julius was a boy, Joseph Kony was beginning his reign of terror in Uganda. A band of Kony's men raided Awake, kidnapping Julius and some other boys. Forced to march cross country and serve at the behest of one of the "captains," Julius spent several months as a boy soldier. Finally, during an attack on Kony's men, Julius was able to escape and return to his family in Awake. At school, Julius began to distinguish himself as a runner. When he qualified for a meet forty miles away, he could not find anyone to drive him there. So he ran the forty miles, and the next day swept the three events in which he competed. (He was thrilled with the prize: a jerrycan to carry water!) He then won at a national meet in Kampala, accepted a scholarship to an elite prep school there, and became an elite runner.

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