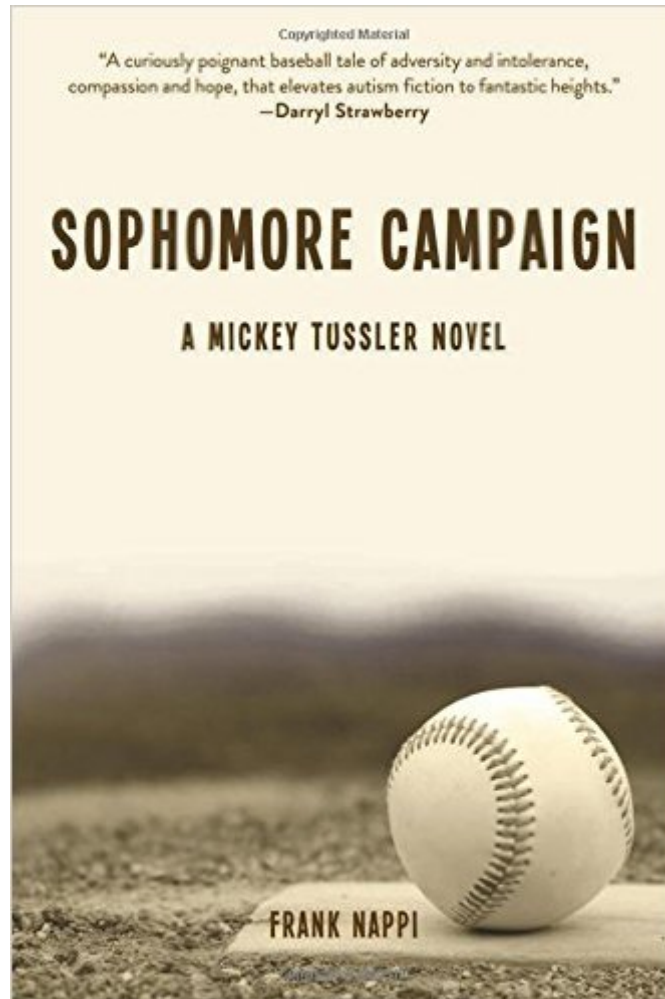


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# Sophomore Campaign: A Mickey Tussler Novel



## Synopsis

It's 1949 and eighteen-year-old pitching phenom Mickey Tussler is back with the rejuvenated minor league Brewers in the sequel to *The Legend of Mickey Tussler* (the basis for the television movie *A Mile in His Shoes*). Despite Mickey's proclamation that he will never play baseball again after last season's violent conclusion, his manager—and now surrogate father—Arthur Murphy cajoles the emotionally fragile, socially awkward boy with autism into giving it another shot. Mickey reluctantly returns to the field and must once again cope with the violence and hatred around him. When a young African American player joins the team, the entire team is subjected to racial threats and episodes of violence, one of which Mickey witnesses firsthand. Struggling to understand such ugliness and hatred, and fearful of reprisal should he tell anyone about what he has seen, the boy's performance on the field suffers. Mickey now must deal with a side of human nature he scarcely comprehends.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 6 - 11

## Customer Reviews

I have been a huge fan of author Frank Nappi since I read his debut novel, the award-winning *Echoes from the Infantry: A Novel* in 2005. My faith in his great potential was rewarded; since then he has written *The Legend of Mickey Tussler: A Novel* which was released as a film last September and is now a DVD. Movie title is "A Mile in His Shoes," starring Dean Cain

and Luke Schroder. And now Nappi has penned *Sophomore Campaign: A Mickey Tussler Novel*, the exciting sequel which is also slated for film. *Sophomore Campaign* picks up where "Mickey Tussler" left off, with Mickey, the autistic young baseball player, and Arthur Murphy, the coach who discovers him, entering another season of minor league baseball for the beloved Milwaukee Brewers. Mickey's mother Molly finally leaves his abusive father and they move in with Murph who is very good to them, nurturing them in all ways. He becomes a surrogate father to Mickey, while Molly and Murph develop feelings for each other, but agree to keep it platonic. After last season's violent conclusion, Molly is reluctant for Mickey to play again this year; she fears their main rival team might get violent again, damaging her son's spirit beyond repair. With a wicked pitching arm, Mickey has become the team's most valuable asset and is idolized by baseball fans all over. When in the game, he overcomes his social awkwardness and mental fragility, and due to Murph's tender, loving care, he certainly learns all about baseball. The trouble starts this season with the opposing pitcher holding a huge grudge against Mickey for gaining such popularity. With the approval of his unethical coach, he plans to undermine Mickey at every opportunity, even to cruelty, if need be. But the real trouble commences with Murph hiring an African American ballplayer with raw talent and great potential. Remember, this is set in the 40s when prejudice was still pretty rampant... It's enough to say that the entire team is subjected to racial threats and violent episodes, one of which Mickey witnesses firsthand. His struggles to understand such ugliness and hatred affect his game... That's all I can say without giving spoilers. Why does Molly Tussler finally consent for her son to play again? What happens when fans quit attending games because of their outdated prejudices, and how do the fans treat the new player Sledge? How does this effect Mickey? What happens between the club owner and Coach Murph? And how does the Klu Klux Klan become involved? But for romantics, the main question is what finally happens between Murphy and Molly? :-)

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the answers to those questions, and I'm certain you will, also. Frank Nappi is a gifted writer who understands human nature and has a clear, concise way of presenting his stories. He makes his characters, the games and the scenery come alive before your eyes. I really care what happens to each and every one of them; even while rooting for the bad guys to get their comeuppance... Despite representing the 40s accurately (with all its prejudice), this is a very wholesome, inspiring book. You will end up admiring this author as much as you love the spirit of Mickey Tussler, a role model for autistic children everywhere. Since "The Legend of Mickey Tussler" was a homerun, *Sophomore Campaign* is a grand slam! Very highly recommended... Reviewed by Betty Dravis, April 25, 2012 Author of award-winning "1106 Grand Boulevard"

This is Frank Nappi's second novel featuring Mickey Tussler. This is the continuance from the introductory novel "The Legend of Mickey Tussler: A Novel. In the first we meet Mickey, an autistic kid with a mean pitching arm. He is discovered by Arthur Murphy a baseball coach. He Plays for the Milwaukee Brewers (circa 1940's) a minor league team. He has become a fan favorite and the city has galvanized around him. The first book ended with a horrible amount of violence from a rival team that left Mickey shaken and his mom unsure whether to let him play again. Molly, Mickey's mom is a battered wife and his dad doesn't much care for him. The coach becomes a father figure to him and as a result he also begins to develop feeling for his mother. In this novel we see that relationship develop. Trouble starts up right away as the rival teams picture is still having trouble accepting he was out pitched by a (retard) 1940's vernacular for the mentally challenged. When Coach Murphy hires a Negro for team everything explodes. Mickey doesn't understand the hatred and violence. If you want a whitewashed version of life in America during that time period this is not the book for you. Frank Nappi gives us a cold hard look at where we came from and it is not pretty. Prejudice abounded and not just against Blacks it was aimed at anyone with a disability. We were a country of intolerances. In order to find out what happens to Mickey, Molly, Coach and the young Negro ballplayer, you will just have to buy the book. You will be engrossed in this book so deep that you will not want to put it down.

Sophomore Campaign by Frank Nappi took me completely by surprise. I am not a baseball fan by any means but I was able to relate to the story in many ways. Being born in Wisconsin and having parents who talked about Robin Yount and Paul Molitor, I was thrilled to discover that the novel focused on the Milwaukee Brewers. This in and of itself drew me into the story despite its baseball focus. I was thrilled as I read more and realized that one of the main character Mickey Tussler was exhibiting symptoms of autism. With a background in Special Education and a lot of experience working with Autistic children and adults, I genuinely enjoy working with and learning about individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Two points of connection already had me won over, but as I read further and I saw the story take on the topic of segregation during the 1940's and the struggle to concur it I knew that the book would be outstanding. I enjoyed this story so much that I read it in less than a day. I couldn't put it down. Thank you Frank Nappi for drawing me into your world. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I can't wait to read another one.

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