



The Game Can't Love You Back

Karole Cozzo

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Eve is used to being the odd woman out. As the only girl on her school's baseball team, she knows exactly how to put sweaty, macho baseball players in their place, and she's focused on one thing and one thing only—being the best pitcher she can be.

But when a freak accident forces her high school to be absorbed by the neighboring town, Eve has to contend with a new group of guys who aren't used to having a woman on their team. And the new team's star pitcher, Jamie, has no interest in being ousted from his throne. He can't afford to give up his starting slot to a new pitcher—even worse, to a girl.

As the competition between Jamie and Eve starts to heat up, so does their attraction to each other. Can they keep their heads in the game, or will they end up getting played?

The Game Can't Love You Back Details

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Author : Karole Cozzo

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From Reader Review *The Game Can't Love You Back* for online ebook

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

I was on the promotional blog tour for this book! I also received a digital copy in exchange for an honest review via NetGalley!

4.5 out of 5 stars!

This was a great YA Contemporary Romance to read, as the summer months begin and the baseball hots up. As I am from England, I was a little bit nervous to see what the baseball storyline regarding the main character Eve would be like. But rest assured, it was really refreshing to read a sport that I don't often see portrayed in YA Fiction. After her high school is involved in an accident, the sport teams from the high school end up merging with a different high school. Truth is, Eve is the only girl on her high school's baseball team and not everyone is accepting of that. She meets Jamie, one of the star baseball players who always seems to want it all, the fame and trophies but she wants to be the best that she can be, not second best. Throughout the novel, their interactions are key, I can also relate to the only girl on a sports team aspect as I was on my old high school's basketball team with a dozen other guys. I enjoyed the writing style, it was easy to get into the story with good pacing. I liked reading from both Eve and Jamie's POVs as I was curious to see what the other was thinking during their encounters.

I also like the fact that the novel stands alone, the ending really tied up the storyline well. Eve as a character at times could get really emotional but also, try to stand her ground. It was a good coming-of-age novel and would happily re-read this again! The romance involved wasn't too insta-love either since this aspect is actually a pet peeve of mine. This is a perfect read for teen girls and no, you don't need to be a huge expert in baseball to read this one. The conversation that Eve and her Mum had at the end was really heartwarming and one of my favourite scenes overall. In conclusion, add this one to your summer TBRs!

Karlita | Tale Out Loud says

Full Review at Tale Out Loud | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram

When an electrical fire broke out at Farmington South High School, students especially those who are member of the sports team didn't have any choice but be absorbed by the Farmington East High School.

Female baseball player, **Eve "Phenom" Marshall** was forced to join the Pirate's baseball team playing along with their star player, **Jamie "Ace" Abrams**. Not only they're both vying for the same trophy but they also instantly had the connection but not the kind you are thinking because well, they hate each other. *A lot.* **Would they ever get along to win the game or the competition between them will just hit the home run?**

Eve is a badass female character who is a strong athlete — driven, confident with an intense determination. Though Jaime had done things that supposed to break her, she was someone who would never easily give up. The only thing she ever wanted was to have a chance to prove that she's a team player too because Eve believe in herself that she can play with one of the boys and not just the odd girl out.

Gender-based eligibility where female players and even coaches who, more often than not are marginalized and undervalued is an ongoing issue in the world of sports. **And as timely as it is, I love how the author made a character out of Eve as a shout out to every female athlete** who strongly believe that gender shouldn't matter as long as you are passionate and love what you are doing.

On the other hand, Jaime may carries an air of arrogance and could be a complete jerk at times but as I read the story, **I found out that he was a kind, tender person with a big heart who will do anything to help his mother and protect his sister.** I finally understood why getting the Cy trophy or scholarship was very important to him because beneath his hard-ass personality lies someone who's experienced rough times.

Told in alternating dual POV, I really like how the main characters become relatable from being unlikeable. Eve and Jaime didn't exactly started as an endearing persons with flying colors because they were both jealous and have their own selfish pursuits. But eventually, they changed, grew and earned each other's respect. And when their hate at first sight ended into a stealthily relationship (which I'm annoyed that they have to make their relationship a secret), they have to choose what's more important — baseball or their feelings for each other.

Sports romance needs a lot of research like any other genre such as fantasy or science fiction and just by reading every detail of play the story had which was believable without a doubt, I knew instantly Karole Cozzo did hers too. She even watched *Pitch* to give more justice to the sports aspect of the story and **was also able to address topics like breaking stereotypes, gender equality, living under government assistance program and an issue about bullying.**

However, I wish I've seen more of the familial bond and friendship within the story. If Eve and Jaime's parents could have been more included into the dialogue, it would surely added more depth to their emotional outlet. The friendship between Eve and Marcella also felt like it just went into a flash or how Jaime's relationship with his sister, Olivia was, which were the two things I'm actually looking forward to know more into the story.

Overall, I couldn't *not* enjoy the story even if it has the same predictability like all the hate-to-love YA romance I've read. I had so much fun waiting for Eve and Jaime's stubbornness to melt and reading the cutesy scenes like the *naked half mile* and *Turn the Hoses car wash* were some of my favorites. The best part was how they learn, hurt and along the process, realized that they're actually on the same team.

The Game Can't Love You Back is a story about acceptance and taking the leap that pitch just the right amount of humor and drama with a grand slam cast of main characters, and Huzzah filled moments of crazy banter!

*****Thank you to NetGalley, MacMillian Children's Publishing Group – Swoon Reads, Xpresso Book Tours and Karole Cozzo for providing me an eARC in exchange for a fair and honest review!**

Katy Upperman says

Three Awesome Things About THE GAME CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK...

1. Badass female lead. Just wait until you meet Eve -- she's strong, smart, loyal, determined, and super athletic. She stares down sexism and intimidation without flinching, and I adore her.
2. Dreamiest male lead. Jamie is a new favorite book boy; he has a reputation for being a player, but he's

actually got a heart of gold. He's so sweet to Eve (eventually), and endlessly devoted to his family and his teammates. *swoon*

3. Enemies to lovers. One of my favorite tropes, and Karole pulls it off beautifully. Eve and Jamie begin the story as competing pitchers on the same baseball team and hate each other intensely. It's not long, though, before they start to see the good in each other and, as their relationship develops, the chemistry skyrockets. Definitely put this one on your "Books to Read in 2018" list!

T.H. Hernandez says

My favorite Karole Cozzo book to date, and the title, *THE GAME CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK*, might be the most perfect title ever — it perfectly sums up the themes of the story. When Eve's high school suffers a freak accident, she and the rest of her Bulldogs are forced across town to attend school with the rival Pirates. And the school rivalry is only the beginning of her issues. As the only girl in a family of boys, Eve's mom told her if she wanted to play sports, she'd play with her brothers, because she didn't have time to start carting a child off to girls' sports as well. So Eve plays baseball, not softball. Problem is, the boys' baseball team at her new school doesn't want her anymore than she wants to be there, particularly rival pitcher, Jamie. Jamie is all smooth lines and cocky smiles, everything Eve despises. Eve glares far more than she smiles and has an attitude to match, everything Jamie despises. So of course these two enemies are fated to become something more.

Plot

The story is about Eve and Jamie on and off the mound. Their romance is the main focus, but with both of them vying for the Cy Young award at the end of the season, there's no way things in the primary plot are going to go smoothly. With Eve's stubborn need to prove she's one of the boys and Jamie quiet determination to prove she's more than that means there's plenty of conflict. There's also Jamie's history as a player, Eve's inexperience in that area, jealous girls who see Eve as a rival, and an unwillingness to allow their relationship to come under the scrutiny of their teammates, meaning their tender relationship is clandestine at best. Cozzo executes all of this with moments of laugh-out-loud humor and even a few that made me tear up.

The Characters

I absolutely adore Eve. She's a refreshing departure from many female protagonists I've read lately. She's complex and relatable, tough, determined, but with a vulnerable streak she wishes she didn't have. I love her naivete with a solid streak of street smarts that makes her anything but typical. Jamie has a lot more baggage that drives him, but his walls crumble around Eve, making him vulnerable in his own ways. Eve is ultimately torn between what she wants on and off the field, and her growth comes when she figures out what matters most in life. The other characters are mostly minor players, a supporting cast that basically exist to prop up the main characters. They do their job without coming across as too flat.

Top Five Things I Loved About *THE GAME CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK*

1. First kisses. One of the all-time best first kisses in the history of young adult fiction.
2. Eve. I loved her stubborn streak, her need to win, the way she doesn't care about dresses or makeup. She was so easy to relate to.
3. Baseball. I'm a big fan of the game and the way it was woven into the story got me even more fired up to watch my sad Padres this season.

4. Witty banter. Eve and Jamie had some of the best lines in the book when they were baiting each other. The dialogue was one of my favorite parts of the book.

5. Jamie. He was perfectly flawed in all the best ways to make him a natural fit for Eve.

Bottom Line

A fantastic young adult sports romance with fabulous characters and sizzling dialogue.

Disclaimer

I was provided with a copy of this book by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Dani (Dani Reviews Things & Love in a time of Feminism) says

CW: references to domestic abuse

This one hooked me very quickly. Ambitious, single-minded female athlete vs cool player (in more ways than one), both vying for the same position on the baseball team? Yes please. I don't even care about baseball (sorry, I'm a rugby girl). I was just in it for the competitiveness.

There was something kind of ruthless about Eve. She was so focused on winning, and it wasn't even really about proving a point. It just was what it was: she played baseball because her older brothers played baseball. But even if proving a point wasn't her main driver for getting onto the boys' team, she still enjoyed facing up to them *and winning*.

I found out I could stare down those boys who had three inches of height and twenty pounds of muscle on me. From the mound, I could take them down, take them out. I still can. It's an awesome feeling, exhilarating and powerful and fun as hell.

Despite being terrible at sports myself, I could connect with Eve. She was in an all-male team, playing a sport seen as masculine, and while she could hold her own on the mound, she was still considered "other" by her team. This is a lot like being the only woman in an all-male team at work, doing a job seen as masculine (IT). It was almost a little painful to read about how hard she worked to try to earn a place amongst her teammates.

I say it wasn't about proving a point, but there was a point to be made when her school merged with Jamie's. These two *hated* each other. I don't know why I took so much delight in it. This was definitely on the angsty side of things. In the beginning, it seemed almost one-sided. Sure, Eve didn't like Jamie's attitude towards her, but most of the hate and actual acting on it came from his side. She just wanted to have a part in the team; he wanted her nowhere near the team. So I had a hard time buying into him as a romantic hero, especially at the beginning. She did eventually show her darker side, so it balanced a bit.

And their relationship was by no means perfect. But I liked the messiness of it, how it wasn't a fluffy HEA but a "we've got issues but we can work on this together" romance. It was a slow-burn, a more innocent YA version of the magic that Mariana Zapata can work. Their relationship revealed more nuance and vulnerability on both sides, particularly Eve's. The ending especially had its own unique appeal, acknowledging who they are instead of going the default route.

The Game Can't Love You Back was a slightly angsty sports romance, filled with competition, determination, and some serious hate-to-love messiness that just felt so real and imperfect. I *loved* it.

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

mith says

as always, this review's on the blog as well!

This is my second book by Karole Cozzo and it has a completely different tone than her last novel—*The Truth About Happily Ever After*. This isn't bad at all, actually, and I loved that she's able to write such different characters with really different voices.

For the most part, *The Game Can't Love You Back* is a good book. I liked the plot, I liked the romance—and the build-up to it!—and the characters. It was well written, had great swoony scenes, and all the sports talk didn't haunt me! (You have to understand, gym class in high school is a universal traumatic experience.)

But. This is where for the most part comes in. I liked the characters, but Eve really, really got under my skin sometimes.

Eve is really hardcore. She doesn't back down easily and she sure as hell doesn't give up easily. She's the only girl on her new school's all boy baseball team and she gets shit for it. She constantly has to prove herself to them, which sucks because boys aren't worth anything, but I get it. I liked her and her character throughout was very believable and likable. But. I hated, hated, hated that she looked down on things she considered "girly." You can do and like whatever the hell you want but there is absolutely no reason to play down on things that you consider "girly." It happened throughout the book and it irritated me so, so much.

Frankly, I didn't really care for Jamie for most of the novel. He didn't really stand out to me, save for the scenes where he talked about his family or we got a look into it. It was something I really related with and not something you see a lot of in general. It was his development that warmed me up to him—he changed from that flirty, playboy-ish kinda guy. He was also sweet with Eve after they got over their initial rivalry.

Speaking of which—this is indeed a hate-to-love story and I really enjoyed it! Their rivalry was well done and they had an actual reason for it, not just some petty thing where they try their best to get back at each other. I liked how they got over their differences and eventually settled for a friendship and then something more.

One of the other things that bothered me was that we didn't see much of Eve's friend, despite the fact that she sort of had an important issue in the book with her boyfriend. It came up once in a while and I just didn't find that part of the story wrapped up.

Overall, *The Game Can't Love You Back* was a nice read! I enjoyed it (for the most part) and if you're looking for a hate-to-love romance, I would recommend it! 3.5 stars.

Stacee says

2.5 stars?

I really loved this premise and was fairly eager to read the book, yet I'm not entirely sure how I feel now that I'm done with it.

Eve and Jamie are decent enough characters. I liked that they were driven and competitive and focused. I didn't see the chemistry between them and never really got the shift in feelings. There are some great secondary characters {Scott and Marcella mostly} who felt very one dimensional.

Plot wise, it was slow. I struggled really hard in the beginning because Eve and Jamie are so combative and so rude to each other. There were several scenes of team building or games and those disrupted the rhythm of the story as it felt like separate pieces of the story that were forced in.

Overall, it had a lot of potential and something did keep me reading; however the execution seemed like a lot of opportunities were missed.

****Huge thanks to Swoon Reads for providing the arc free of charge****

Vicky Who Reads says

2 stars

Read this review on BooksAndGeeks [here!](#)

I was so excited to read this one. I had craved reading an enemies-to-lovers romance for weeks before and had my eye on this title. When I saw it at the library, I immediately checked it out and started it during the car ride home. Swoon Reads is a great imprint for light, fluffy romances, so I had high hopes for this one.

But, it just didn't really do it for me. I found it to be a little too tropey--enemies-to-lovers and the only girl was a bit too much for me, and it felt like Cozzo was turning her characters into caricatures. Eve was that tomboy who's "not like other girls" and who different enough that she can catch Jamie's eye for a real girlfriend--not those "other" flings.

Both of the main characters felt super dry, and I just wasn't into them. Eve was bland (dare I say, basic?) and Jamie was too "dude-bro." I feel like Cozzo tried to give Jamie layers by giving his family financial strain, but she never went far enough into the emotional impact of this aspect of his life for it to really have any meaning to the reader. By the end of the book, I still didn't really know what either of them liked or struggled with or anything about their motivations.

The character's dryness and trope-like nature made it hard to relate, and it also affected the one aspect I was so excited for in this book: the romance. The romance was like cardboard. One-tonal and easily thrown away. Their romance felt like a billion other romances I had read in the past, and it wasn't ever convincing enough that I was actually shipping the characters. If these were real people, I wouldn't be surprised if they didn't make it to college.

The writing style was...not for me, to say the least. There is a serious ellipsis abuse--I found seven ellipses on one singular page. That's six too many. In a way, I understand why Cozzo was using them--to show train of thought--but there are so many other better, less sloppy writing techniques that could have created the same effect. And they were in excess throughout the story. Maybe if they were used more sparingly and with more purpose, I wouldn't have minded, but in this case with this book, it felt like way too much.

The one place of potential redemption outside of the characters and writing style was in the "only girl on the team" aspect. I thought the way Cozzo addressed things like bigots who think girls can't play baseball was done well, and felt accurate. (Men just can't handle women playing their game well.) The way she incorporated this into the story felt natural, and she also talked about things like sports magazines not examining female athlete's merits, but instead shoving them into pink costumes etc.

Overall, this wasn't my favorite and I wouldn't really recommend this novel, unless you're just looking to read a novel that requires a low-investment of time and emotion commitment on your part.

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Amelia says

Even though the summary makes you think this is a typical teen romance melodrama with a dash of sports, this book exceeded my expectations :D It sounds like it's gonna be all fluffy, light but it wasn't exactly like that. These characters were far more realistic and they were really fleshed out, felt like real people. Both Jamie and Eve had their own problems, but they weren't magically solved after they got together, not was there insta-love. Actually, I found their hate-to-love romance one of the more realistic ones.

I also like how the characters were aware of their mistakes and they didn't hold back, they always said what needed to be said. I especially liked how they argued and knew how to put the other person in their place. In one part towards the end, I thought I'm gonna have to knock down a star because Eve was acting stupid, the author brilliantly solved that "problem" and made her realize how ridiculous she's being. It sounds kinda weird when I'm saying it like this, but if you read the book, you'll know what I'm talking about XD

At first I thought Eve was gonna be my fave character, but in time I've realized how Jamie had an even better characterization and how it was easier for me to understand him. Simply said, the author did a great job at character development.

The thing that kinda annoyed me, but that was more because of my own disinterest and lack of knowledge, was all the sports talk. When the MC were in the middle of a game, I had no idea what was going on, nor what they were saying. I don't really like sports okay?

If we ignore the "full-sports" scenes and the fact that some secondary characters just disappear after fulfilling their part in the MCs development, this book was pretty good. I have to admit, there were some really cute scenes and I just couldn't stop grinning like a crazy person XD Also, this title is PERFECT. At first I wasn't sure what it meant, but it was all explained and it showed how this book wasn't just about love and sports :D

Grace {Rebel Mommy Book Blog} says

Super cute

Marty :) (thecursedbooks) says

(2.5 stars)

I was super excited to read this book when I first got it. I don't think I talk about it a lot, but I absolutely adore sport romances. I love Zapata's books, but I read very few sport romances in the young adult genre. Therefore, I was super hyped about this one!

Sadly, I had some serious issues with this one.

Our two protagonists, Eve and Jamie, are thrown into the same baseball team due to an accident at Eve's school (her school closes and all her classmates are relocated at Jamie's school). They are super competitive because each one of them was a huge star in their respective team and now they kind of have to compete for the spotlight and for a sports award as well.

And while they competed for those things, I was there, rooting for absolutely no one.

I just couldn't care for any of the two main characters for most part of the book. Eve was okay, I liked her at first, but I also got major 'one-of-the-boys'/// 'not-like-the-other-girls' feelings from her and I just don't like those things. It's totally alright to be a tomboy, but at times it felt like she was acting superior to all the other girls who didn't do sports and were more interested in make-up. There was also this part (near the end) where she was slut-shaming some girls for flirting with Jamie and other players from the baseball team and it was absolutely annoying. For a person who calls herself a feminist calling some girls skanks merely because she was jealous, yeaaaah, not cool.

Jamie was a textbook bad boy and he did some super problematic things through the book. Besides using the word 'pussy' for a guy he considered a coward (or whatever), which is the worst, there was also this time when he was already in love with Eve and couldn't defend her and her worth as a baseball player when his teammate was calling her undeserving because she was a girl. WHAT???? And no, it's not enough that in his monologue he got somewhat annoyed at said teammate. I think the decent thing would have been to call out that guy for being sexist.

Another thing that bothered me so much was how this book seemed to go for the narrative that women should give up on their dreams to be with a man and I felt so much anger over it. I mean, why can't a man give up on his dreams to be with me? Or why can't they both make some compromises and go for something that's equally good for both of them? Why should a woman make those sacrifices? I'm not here for this narrative.

You might wonder why I'm giving it three stars if I criticized the characters so much. Well, that's because it was still a light read and at times, it was pretty fun! I'm a sucker for the hate-to-love trope/the enemies-to-

lovers, so I enjoyed the angst and the tension between the two of them. But it's totally not my favourite love-to-hate romance, mostly because at times, I thought Jamie went too far (at the beginning) and didn't think he would be a good love interest for Eve.

Also, I liked Marcella, Eve's friend a lot, she was really cool. I wish she was more present in this one.

I would recommend this book to those who like sports romances and the enemies-to-lovers trope. I'm certain that there will be people who will love this one so much more than I did!

I want to thank Macmillan International for sending me this review copy, this hadn't influenced my review or rating in any way.

Samantha (WLABB) says

Rating: 4.5 Stars

When I first heard about this book, I was all over it because I was a fan of the TV show, Pitch, and I love Karole Cozzo books. Needless to say, I devoured this book, starting and finishing it in the same day. It was fun, heartwarming, compelling, and swoony.

- Pro: Eve was a fabulous female. She was fierce, empowered, and passionate, and she went after what she wanted, but she wasn't just this hard, tough as nails woman. She had soft parts too, and I really liked seeing all those sides of her.
- Pro: There was more to Jamie than I thought. His home life was not all rainbows and unicorns, and his family was struggling, but he didn't hold pity parties. He pitched in by having a job, doing the shopping, and trying to help with his sister when possible. He had his "Ace" persona, the player and life of the party, and then there was Jamie, who was saved for a select few, and it was him I was really fond of.
- Con: There were a few loose ends, and though I did not feel they were major plot points, I would have liked to see these things tied up.
- Pro: The school merger premise was something I thought worked really well. It presented Eve and Jamie with many challenges, and created a lot of tension in the story.
- Pro: The ending was cute and sweet, and so appropriate for these two characters, BUT
- Con: I felt like it was a little rushed, and I would have loved to have seen a little more of the "after".
- Pro: Though I may not be athletic enough, I would love to be part of Eve's family. I adored her no-nonsense mom, who shot straight from the hip, and I thought their mother's day celebration was all sorts of wonderful. It was obvious how much Eve's family contributed to her success by just being supportive and present for her.
- Pro: I loved that Eve may shared a super strong friendship with someone so different from herself. Her bestie was her polar opposite, but she was really good for Eve, because she made her examine situations from different perspectives.

- Pro: I love me some hate-to-love romances, and this one was super fun. It was great seeing the verbal sparring slowly turn from barbs to flirty banter, and as their attraction and affection for each other grew, we got to see more and more of the real Eve and Jamie.

- Pro: I really appreciated that Cozzo addressed some the shortcomings of being a female playing a boy's sport. I had never really considered the "after" in this situation.

- Pro: I shipped these two. They had great chemistry, and were able to bring out the best parts of each other.

Overall: A wonderful, swoony romance, which filled that Pitch-sized void in my heart.

*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review

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Kathy Martin says

THE GAME CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK was a great sports romance. It is told in two viewpoints. Eve is an athlete and, whatever she plays, she wins. She has awards for soccer, basketball ... and baseball. Yup, she's been playing with the boys since she and her older brothers were all in Little League.

When her high school catches on fire, ruining the gym and some other areas, the school district decides that all the students will join their classmates at the other high school in the district. Now, the Bulldogs all have to become Pirates and fit into a new school.

The school merger might be the ruin of Eve's quest for the school's Cy Young trophy because the Pirates already have a star pitcher. Jamie Abrams needs the recognition of being an award winner. He is a talented baseball player but not a very good student. He is a popular guy with more than his fair share of girlfriends and hook-ups. His home life is also messed up. His mom has finally kicked out the latest bad boyfriend but it is hard to pay the bills on a job at Target. Jamie has also been working all he can at a burger place to help with the family's finances. A baseball scholarship is his best chance at college and a possible pro career.

Eve and Jamie are immediately rivals. Both are very competitive people. Also, being the only girl on the team adds additional pressure to Eve who has to gain the respect of a whole new bunch of teammates. But the attraction between them is growing. They recognize and like each other's strengths. The only problem for Eve is that things are already changing so much in her life as she physically matures and sees the end of her baseball life coming. She is starting to feel that she doesn't know herself.

The story was well-written. The sports scenes were realistic as were the emotions of devoted athletes. I really enjoyed this book and its memorable characters.

Camila Roy •RoyIsReading• says

3.5*

Olivia (The Candid Cover) says

4.5 Stars

As a fan of books about sports, the enemies to lovers trope, strong female characters, and Karole Cozzo, *The Game Can't Love You Back* just screams recipe for success. This book is empowering and follows the story of the only female athlete on a school baseball team. It is both cute and significant, and it lived up to my every expectation.

[Full review on The Candid Cover](#)
