



Ultraball #1: Lunar Blitz

Jeff Chen

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Enter the exhilarating game of Ultraball—fly over pass rushers and explode into slingshot zones—through Jeff Chen’s dazzling future world on the moon. Here Ultraball is life, and survival is all that matters. Perfect for sci-fi and sports fans alike.

Strike Sazaki loves defying gravity on the moon in his Ultrabot suit. He’s the best quarterback in the league, but while Strike’s led the Taiko Miners to the Ultrabowl three years in a row, each one has ended in defeat.

This year, Strike thinks he’s finally found the missing piece to his championship quest: a mysterious girl who could be his new star rocketback. But Boom comes from the Dark Siders, a mass of people who left the United Moon Colonies to live in exile. And not all his teammates are happy sharing a field with her.

When rumors surface of a traitor on the Miners, Strike isn’t sure who he can trust. If Strike can’t get his teammates to cooperate and play together, they’ll lose more than just the Ultrabowl. The stake of the colony’s future is on his shoulders.

Ultraball #1: Lunar Blitz Details

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From Reader Review Ultraball #1: Lunar Blitz for online ebook

Akoss says

@Kidlitexchange #partner - I received a copy of this book from the Kidlitexchange network in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Releasing 1/15/19

The Blind Side meets Real Steel.

Earth now has colonies on the moon but said colonies are left without support after Earth “literally goes nuclear”. For the survivors in the least fortunate moon colonies, winning the Ultraball is the only way to survive and have a shot at a possible future. Taiko Colony is one and Strike with the Taiko Miners are its beacon of hope for survival.

The tangled web of trust, distrust and suspicion in the story will keep you on the edge of your seat. Every Taiko Miners’ football match will leave your heart racing as you root for Strike and his team to win. I love how the players struggle to work as a team and trust each other mirrors their own personal struggles with loyalty and betrayal. Once you get a full picture of how precarious Taiko Colony’s situation is you won’t be able to put this book down until you reach the last page.

I wanted to hug Strike and his teammates when I got to the end. They stole my heart. I need to re-read this once it’s released into the world.

If you love books with a lot of heart this book is for you.

Karen McKenna says

Initially, I wasn't too sure about this book. Sports books and science fiction books don't often make it to my TBR pile. But knowing my students need variety, I decided to give this a try. I was pleasantly surprised. Not normally a fan of football, I still found myself rooting for Strike and the Miners. I think you will too.

Ultraball is an extreme version of football played in specialized spacesuits on uniquely crafted fields filled with extra traps and obstacles. The team of 5 must stay on the field for the entire game or forfeit, playing both offense and defense. The games are a lot of fun, but what makes this book even more riveting is the high stakes. If Strike and the Miners do not win the Championship this year, their colony will be taken over by the most powerful thug on the moon, and most likely destroyed. Strike is fairly certain Zuna paid one of his teammates to throw the game last year, and he can't let it happen again. However, rumors are circulating that there is another rat who has received a bribe to turn on the team again this year. Who the traitor is will keep you guessing all the way through the story.

Ultraball players are preteens, because adults outgrow the specialized suits, but the interactions and story line play as older. Because of this, I believe this book is a great fit for the gap between students who are aging out of middle grade but too young for the more mature young adult material. It is also a fast-paced adventure sure to please fans of football, science fiction, or dystopian stories. While lighthearted, the fate of many lives

weighs on the characters, and the themes of power and corruption add depth to the banter and games. As an adult reader I did miss some more nuanced story-telling techniques and had many unanswered questions about the colonies on the moon, but I also recognized that this book meets the needs of my students. I often hear them say they want a straight forward book that is not "confusing". This book fits the bill. Details are revealed as needed, but not before. The plot for the most part runs chronologically. It is not too heavily science fiction or dystopian, making it a great gateway book for students. I really enjoyed this story, but more importantly, I am thrilled to add this title to my arsenal of books to encourage students to read.

#LitReviewCrew

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Plus

In a futuristic dystopia where governmental differences are resolved with Ultraball games, orphan children are recruited to play the game on their colony on the moon. Strike Sazaki is glad of his opportunities, even if things don't always go smoothly for him. Playing Ultraball is better than being in the Tao Children's Home with other children, many of whom are recruited for the sport, since the only Ultrabot uniforms are child-size. Since NASA delivered those, Earth went "nuclear", and there is no support from the home planet. Strike really wants his settlement's team, the Taiko Miners, to win the Ultrabowl so that they can get the vital equipment they need, but they just don't have the right players. Enter Boom, who is a great player, but who is from the Dark Siders community of exiles. The different moon colonies are all very distinctive, with separate jump suit colors, but the Dark Siders wear all white, since they are rumored to be deathly pale. Hopefully, Boom will help, since she is a fantastic player, because if Taiko loses, the colony will be taken over by Raiden Zuna and used for blast fracking and explosive mining. Strike has to deal with a potential traitor on the Miners team, and make sure that everyone works together, since so much rests on the big game.

Strengths: This was an interesting mix of space adventure and football, and there aren't many of those around. Strike and his friends are scrappy and have their differences, but eventually work together for a common goal. I loved that their saving grace was Boom, who was from a community they didn't trust. The Ultrabot suits were very fun, and there are some interesting details about living on a moon community that isn't really thriving (sketchy food, regulated bathroom times, etc.). The cover and title are great; no guessing what this one is about!

Weaknesses: It would have been helpful to have more background information on what went wrong initially, and then why the moon colonies are imperiled. The information was there, but in bits and pieces. This is one instance where I would have liked an introductory info dump.

What I really think: I will definitely purchase this, although it may be hard to find the right readers for it. Jake Maddox fans forced to read sci fi? Football players who just pretend to read *The Maze Runner*? There's not a lot of overlap in my library between readers who want football books and readers who want speculative fiction, although this does a great job of including both.
