

# Hightower inspires with The Whistleblower' book

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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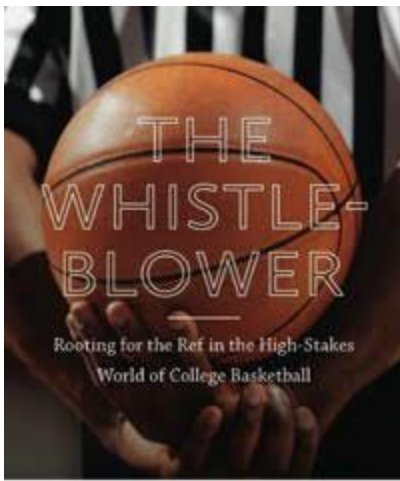




Dr. Ed Hightower spent 19 years as a superintendent of Edwardsville Community District 7, but what he may be most known for is his legendary career as a NCAA basketball official.

Hightower retired as superintendent of District 7 at the end of June and in fitting style, he has a book - written by well-known author Bob Katz that is selling well on the national market.

The book – “The Whistleblower: Rooting for the Ref in the High-Stakes World of College Basketball” – is available at area retail outlets, Amazon and Barnes and Noble. A few chapters of the book can be read before purchase on Amazon.



BOB KATZ

Katz spent a year tailing Hightower around and didn't focus only on his career as a referee, but all the components of his life, including his time as superintendent of one of the top schools in Illinois, at Edwardsville.

"Just because you have a setback in life, don't blame everybody else, but make the best of the situation and figure out how to turn this terrible situation into a better situation," he said.

The Chicago Tribune, the Boston Globe and National Public Radio have all given the book rave reviews and it has also been a topic of conversations on several talk shows.

Katz said Hightower is "a hard worker who has been involved in a lot of important arenas from college basketball to public education."

"He is all a writer could want for if starting to write a non-fiction book," he said.

Hightower definitely hopes the book will inspire others to try to achieve great things.

"My goal and hope is individuals will read this book and see that there is an opportunity out there for them to succeed within whatever realm of life they are pursuing," he said.

Hightower started the early part of his life in the South and he talks about going to one of the first integrated schools where he lived.

One of his first teachers in the school did nothing to inspire him and didn't think he or any of the kids in her class would amount to anything, he said. But then his next teacher was Miss Jackson and she said, "You can make it."

"Miss Jackson made every kid feel that he or she was the most important kid in the classroom," Hightower said. "I wanted to please Miss Jackson. She made you feel so important, you wanted to do your homework."

Hightower viewed his role as a superintendent and referee as very interchangeable.

"In the book I talk about some of those games and as superintendent and decision-making. Bob followed me to games and around my office to meetings. You can't be unraveled by what you perceive as being unfair criticism."

Hightower said what he learned through the years is it is important that through your body of work the condition of an organization is better when you are leaving than when you arrived.

"Sometimes you are just wrong," he said. "I would go to a coach and say I made a mistake if I did as a referee."

Hightower said you gain respect and dignity if you don't pass the buck.

"As superintendent I never passed the buck on one of the subordinates," he said. "I saw it as my responsibility and I accept that responsibility."

Even when he heard he was a terrible official from an angry fan, Hightower didn't let it bring him down.

"I don't enjoy the criticism of fans, but you know you wouldn't work all those major games if you were a terrible official," he said.

"I wouldn't have worked 12 Final Fours, the World Games if I was a terrible official. You had to internalize all of it, but you can't let it unravel you."

Katz devoted an entire chapter to Hightower's amazing family and single mother, who started Ed's journey in Missouri.

Many may not believe this, but Ed Hightower began his working career as a sharecropper in the cotton fields.

Another story Hightower has relayed to people over the years was when he wanted to be on the safety patrol in the integrated school. When it came to select the safety patrol he was not picked.

“I went home to my mother, Daisy, and told her I had been mistreated. Her attitude was that this was secondary; the primary thing was to get an education and put yourself in a position where you can make decisions and you will never allow that to happen to other kids.”

In his 41 years in education, Hightower never forgot his mother’s words or how she always inspired him and the rest of his family to set high goals and work to achieve them.

“I have made mistakes and not made the right decision every time, but I have always tried to make the best decision not for Ed Hightower, but what was in the best interest of the kids. I always made the decision considering how this decision impacts the children.”

Visit [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for Hightower’s book.

## Reviews of Hightower book:

"Two pages in and you know *The Whistleblower* is a different kind of sports book—intellectually different. From on high you’re transported into the world of one of college basketball’s all-time great referees your eyes are opened to a man and a form of performance art that lingers long after the last whistle is blown.”—**Armen Keteyian**, 11-time Emmy winner and lead correspondent for Showtime’s “60 Minutes Sports”

“*The Whistleblower* is as great a tour guide to the game of basketball . . . as any that I’ve ever come across. Katz performs the difficult task of simultaneously entertaining and deeply informing, and does it primarily through, of all figures, a referee, the intriguing and astute **Ed Hightower**.”—**Ira Berkow**, Pulitzer-Prize winning former *New York Times* sportswriter

“If you love sports, pick up this book. It will take you into a new dimension when you watch your next game. Bob Katz’s take on big-time basketball . . . is great because you will realize what you’ve been missing!”—**Juan Williams**, author and FOX News analyst

“By following one of the NCAA’s best, Ed Hightower, Katz shines a welcome light on this often overlooked, often reviled, never fully appreciated figure on the hardwood floor: the one responsible for keeping things fair and square and honest to basketball’s principles of sportsmanship in what has become a multimillion-dollar industry. I’ll never be able to watch another game the same way—and neither will you.”—**Dayton**

**Duncan**, documentary filmmaker and author *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* and *The Dust Bowl: An Illustrated History*.