

## Transcript

### Episode 3.15

#### Book 3, Chapter 15: The Quidditch Final

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and longtime HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Three, Chapter Fifteen: The Quidditch Final.

Lorrie: The Quidditch Final. With Buckbeak sentenced to execution and Draco still mad that Harry got away with throwing mud at him, tensions come to a breaking point when Gryffindor and Slytherin face off in Quidditch. Ha! JC, what do you think of Quidditch?

JC: It took a strangely long time to actually get to the Quidditch in this chapter. With the title being The Quidditch Final, I kept thinking the whole thing was going to be Quidditch, and it's really the last handful of paragraphs, it felt like. And it's an intense Quidditch game.

Lorrie: It is.

JC: A lot happened before it.

Lorrie: So where do you stand on Quidditch as a Harry Potter fan? Some people love it, some people live it; some people, like Hermione, lose focus when Quidditch comes up.

JC: I think that, usually, the author seems to dislike Quidditch herself enough that she uses it judiciously. It's always forwarding the plot when it happens. There's something important happening in Quidditch, so I appreciate that as a reader. I do enjoy reading the way that the action is described; I enjoy the humor of Lee Jordan's commentary in these first few books. Something's always going to happen, whether it's bad or good, and it always does something for the plot, so I do appreciate that, I guess. I don't hate it.

Lorrie: I found that, for somebody who allegedly didn't enjoy writing the Quidditch scenes, the Quidditch scenes are well done. I find them engaging, I find the action exciting. I find them funny and properly chaotic, and I actually feel like I'm at a game. I feel like I'm outdoors, I feel like there's stuff happening. I feel like some people are chanting and cheering, some people are focused on something else. Some people are probably behind the bleachers doing other stuff. It gives me the mood that I'm looking for.

JC: One thing that I do find odd about it -- I guess, growing up as an American in an American high school context -- the idea that you would have intra-school rivalries that are this fierce is kind of surprising to me. At least in the American context, we have these rivalries with other schools -- with kids you don't know and you don't see in your classes every day -- so the idea that they're so wound up about this that they're sabotaging each other and playing dirty tricks on each other at school probably works to help them release some tension around school and all that. You can see it that way, but my experience is not of seeing it happen within a school but like between schools, so I find that really strange.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: As an American.

Lorrie: Yeah. I have been helped by these scholars who write about the function of Quidditch within the larger plot of the series. There's Caitlin Elizabeth Harper, who says that the Quidditch matches prefigure and reflect important events in the series. As an example, she says the way Oliver Wood orders the Gryffindors to accompany Harry everywhere to protect him so that he doesn't get sabotaged is parallel to how the Ministry and the Hogwarts staff have been chaperoning him to protect him against Sirius Black. She says *Prisoner of Azkaban* is essentially all about Quidditch. I thought, 'Oh, really?' Yeah. She says this is the third chapter in this book that's named after Quidditch: there's 'Grim Defeat', there's 'Gryffindor Versus Ravenclaw', and now 'The Quidditch Final'. Hmm, good point. In that first chapter, he lost consciousness because of dementors, which caused him to take Patronus lessons with Lupin. In the second one, he casts a Patronus at what he thought were dementors, and then in this one, we're going to see him be so happy that he "felt he could have produced the world's best Patronus." That prefigures the exceptional Patronus he casts to save himself and Sirius, and I thought, 'Okay, she's got a point.' Barbara Lamond Purdom, who does the Quantum Harry Podcast, writes extensively about how games in this series function as extended metaphors for Harry's growth along his journey and his battle against Voldemort. She pointed out -- which I had never thought about or noticed -- that this year, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, is the only year in which Harry gets to play a complete Quidditch season.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. She says, "Harry grows to see Quidditch -- his chief metaphorical war -- and learning to conjure a Patronus -- something he needs to fight a genuine war -- as essentially interchangeable. One contributes to success in the other in an infinite magical feedback loop." Huh! Once I saw it that way, I realized teaching Harry to do stuff because it'll protect him against Sirius Black or help him fight Voldemort, that's a lot for a 12-year-old, a 13-year-old. But teach him to play a game? That's a different reason for him to actively want to do something, and this is something (Quidditch) that uses his natural talents. It has zero connection to Voldemort. It helps him come to know the feeling of being accepted and valued by the rest of the school for something that any student can do; it's not about him being the Chosen One. This skill of his helps him get a sense of ownership of himself, a skill that's just his. That's how you're going to teach a kid to fight, not by saying, "Remember that we are all doomed."

JC: One of the things that, when I work with teachers, we talk about a lot is identity. It's important for teachers to be really thoughtful about their own identities as teachers, and to think about how your personal identity and your professional identity intersect with what's happening in your classroom and how it intersects with the identity of the other kids in the space. There's

that piece of it, but also with kids, if you're teaching a subject like math or science -- which is the area that I'm in -- it's important for kids to develop identities of themselves as capable of doing those things, as capable of doing math, as capable of doing science.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Math in particular is one where we have to do a lot of work in that area, so we really have to help kids develop that identity. In order to do that, they have to have some agency and ownership of their ideas. They have to have some confidence and some success around doing mathematics. The things that you were just saying about how Harry's getting that through Quidditch made me think, 'Oh, he's developing an identity of himself as being successful at this thing,' and you're right that it's a thing that he owns. He's got agency, he's got ownership of it. It's not something that Voldemort gave him. It's not something that someone else handed to him as a result of him being the Chosen One or whatever. It's a thing that he's got an interest in, and he built this identity for himself. Sorry, I'm always going to make connections back to school.

Lorrie: No, that's why we love and need you. But yeah, this joy in it that Harry actively feels: that's the secret to learning something versus trying to learn it and having mixed feelings about it. He can't wait. He loves this. There we have Quidditch as a way to understand Harry as something other than this poor, doomed child, and that's a good thing to keep in mind as we see the setting for this huge symbolic fight between Gryffindor and Slytherin that's been building all year. It's between Gryffindor and Slytherin, but it's particularly between Harry and Draco where the resentments have just been building and building, because in the background we have the news that Buckbeak has been sentenced to execution, which is definitely part of the Harry versus Draco unease. Poor Hermione says, "There'll be an appeal, though, there always is. Only I can't see any hope. ... Nothing will have changed." That is a great setup for the emotional stakes for the rest of the book after this chapter. What do you do when it does seem hopeless and when it does seem like your struggles aren't going to make any change, and how do you reframe it to see whether what you're doing is actually making a difference? But yeah, for now she's just losing it. She's fraying, and in this chapter we see her fray in three different spots, because she's shrill and she's telling Harry, "You have to beat Draco. I just can't stand it otherwise." She physically slaps Draco, which is dangerous and nobody knows what to do when that happens. She misses Cheering Charms, which even though it's a really obvious joke about the lack of happiness when you're this tired and depressed, it still works -- poor thing -- and she's therefore never going to be as good at Cheering Charms as she would have been if she had attended class. But it's also the end of Hermione thinking that all you need is book learning. She obviously understands that attending class -- going through the steps with the professor -- that's going to be better than just memorizing the theory. And then she loses her temper in Divination and she storms out. She flounces! She does a flounce and she says, "I could be practicing something useful. I could be catching up on Cheering Charms --" That's also a wonderful turning point in this character for showing that she has a purpose; she thinks usefulness is better than books and cleverness for their own sake. Anyway, yeah, the fraying of Hermione is so realistically handled.

JC: Can we go back and talk about each of those things one at a time?

Lorrie: Sure!

JC: Because I love that way of framing this chapter. It's not just about the tension between Harry and Draco. It's also about what's happening with Hermione.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Going back to the slap, it's an incredibly satisfying moment as a reader. Draco has been such a little shit this entire book... For three books, really, but for this book. It almost feels like the author is giving us the satisfaction; everyone wants to strangle him at this point and Hermione slaps him, which is really amazing. One of the things that it made me think about -- obviously, Draco had it coming -- but I don't think that Draco understood... Maybe he did (or maybe he did not) understand that he actually insulted Hermione as much as he was insulting Hagrid, because Hermione's been helping Hagrid with this case. When Draco calls Hagrid 'pathetic' and everything, he's insulting Hermione, too, and she worked her ass off with time she barely had in order to help him out. I think that's really interesting, too. He probably doesn't care at this point in the story what she thinks of him, but when she pulls her wand out at Malfoy, they look at her and then they run away.

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: It's a really interesting moment to me, because I thought, 'Okay, they know that Hermione could do them actual damage.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She just flipped out and slapped Draco, which is out of character for her. She's really, really mad. There are people (and I think I'm actually one of these people) who are really calm and really even, but if something gets you mad, everyone kind of goes, "Oh, shit."

Lorrie: "Okay."

JC: "You never get mad. Oh, my God!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I feel like Hermione... Maybe they have this impression of Hermione. She usually keeps it in check and she keeps it calm, and she's very professional for a kid. She loses it here. She slaps him, she aims her wand at them, and I can only think that they're going, 'She could do some damage.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "She's good. Let's go!" I find that whole scene really interesting about what it says about what they think about Hermione, what they think they know about Hermione.

Lorrie: Yeah. My response was different in a few ways from yours.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: I didn't find it satisfying. I was worried. When she slaps him, I was worried that the author was trying to make it a girl empowerment moment and I didn't feel that way about it. I was scared, because why don't they hit her back? If it had been Ron or Harry or Neville, then that would have been the start of one of those brawls.

JC: True.

Lorrie: Which we see, frequently, it's a gender thing. They don't know if they're allowed to. What are they supposed to do? They're all very confused. That is risky, because if they decided, 'You

know what, I don't care that she's a girl, I'm going to attack her back,' she would be in trouble, so that's a little scary. Then when she pulls the wand out, they realize, 'No, she's so much more powerful than we are. She's on a different level from us. Run.' That's kind of an equalizing moment, but I find it really fraught with gender tension because even a strong boy would be helpless if Crabbe and Goyle decided that they were going to pile on you, so there's that worrisome moment. But yeah, I do love the recognition that deep down, no matter what they say about Hermione, that no, they know. They know that she's stronger than they are. There is a deep-down respect. I do think that Draco knows exactly what he's doing by insulting Hagrid and Hermione, because he keeps looking back at Harry, Ron, and Hermione to gloat as he taunts them about the terrible things that he's going to have happen to Hagrid and Buckbeak and how nobody can stop it. He's only doing this to get at them.

JC: Right, yeah. For sure. Yeah.

Lorrie: I think he thought that there wasn't anything she could do about him taunting him, and then when she breaks protocol and slaps him, I think that's startling. But then when she pulls out her wand... Oh.

JC: Then it's like... Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh. You guys are boys. She's a witch. You guys aren't quite wizards yet; she's a witch.

JC: There's this moment at the very end of that... There's a few moments in here that stood out to me. One is right after Hermione slaps Draco: there's this moment where Ron says weakly, "'Hermione!' and he tried to grab her hand as she swung it back." She says, "Get *off*, Ron!" and then the other boys run away. "'*Hermione!*' Ron said again, sounding both stunned and impressed," and then this is where Hermione says the thing about "You have to beat them... I can't stand it if Slytherin wins!" 'We're due in Charms, said Ron, still goggling at Hermione. 'We'd better go.'" I feel like... Maybe I'm putting shipper goggles on too hard, but there's a moment here where I'm like, 'This may be the first moment where Ron has looked at Hermione and thought, 'That was really hot.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That changes something in the chemistry of his brain. From there on out, he's not mad about Scabbers anymore.

Lorrie: No, no.

JC: He's like, 'Oh, wow.'

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: 'Get you a woman who can do both.' It's like that. It's amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: So I think the next thing...

Lorrie: Cheering Charms!

JC: Can I have a cheering charm? I want one.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I guess you can take them in pill form, but that'd be really great, wouldn't it? You're having a really crappy day, and just to be able to cast a Cheering Charm on yourself...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, that'd be nice. I don't know how they appear in the rest of the book, though. It seems like it'd be one of those things, like self-medicating...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That maybe people could overuse or something. But it is interesting that this is the first time that we have seen Hermione so exhausted and distracted that she made a mistake with her Time-Turner and missed a class.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Is she taking three classes at the same time? Because she did disappear before they went into Charms. Okay, yeah.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Wow. That'd make for a really long morning. You'd be really hungry when lunch came around if you had two extra hours in your morning. Oh, my God. Yeah, that's the first time that really shows, because she is super organized and very able to stay on top with a lot of things going on at once, so that's a sign that she's really, really losing it. There's that one, and then I guess the third one is in Trelawney's classroom. The fact that she gets in there and she's not even bothering to hide her disdain for the teacher or the class. She's saying shit out loud. She's being the kid that we've never seen her be. Usually, she's the "good girl™" and she is not, and it's amazing to me. There's this funny bit where Harry is trying so hard to relax his mind to look into this crystal ball, and he can't do it. He can't even banish the thought, "This is stupid," from his mind, which I think is so funny. It feels like we've all been in a class like that.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yeah.

JC: I try so hard to not have my class be that class when I teach. There's a moment when Hermione... You could see in her head. She just snaps, and she's just like, "Fuck it, I'm out."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's beautiful because again, for me, it felt like I would never have had the nerve to do that. Never, no matter what. I would have sat there and taken it and I would have complained, but I would have done everything I was asked to do. Hermione usually has been that kid all along, but the fact that she's hit her limit, too, is really interesting.

Lorrie: What I like is... I think what this is: she's so tired that her filter is gone. It's not that she hasn't thought these things all along, but the timing when she interrupts Trelawney's ridiculous theatrical buildup -- just as Trelawney's about to deliver her doom, Hermione interrupts loudly: 'Oh, for *goodness*' sake! Not that ridiculous Grim *again!*' That's such an aggressive thing to do to somebody who's being theatrical. To ruin their setup like that and to expose that everybody knew what was coming, and that it's not as effective as you fantasize it is, it's really pulling the curtain back to show all the illusion that was shopworn to begin with. So yeah, the enmity -- the way that destroys Trelawney -- Trelawney can't recover from that.

JC: At this point in the series, we don't feel sorry for Trelawney yet. At least I don't. Later I do, but on a second read, I'm like, 'Okay.'

Lorrie: Well, she's about to demonstrate that she does have some substance to her, Trelawney does.

JC: Oh, yeah. I guess that's true.

Lorrie: Yeah. But at this point, she's just been coasting on this snake oil illusion that is pretty obviously bogus and hurts people.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The students who get all creeped out because she keeps predicting their death, well...

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: You maybe shouldn't do that.

JC: I'm thinking about the parallel... There are teachers who will just tell kids, "You're never going to be able to do this. You're never going to amount to anything. You're worthless."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There are teachers who will say things like that to kids, who will ascribe intentions on kids that there's no evidence for and so on.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She's definitely... Looking at it from the perspective of knowing how she ends up here in the first place, it's like... Okay, a lot of people who are teaching at Hogwarts are not good teachers. Some are, but some are not, and they're not there to teach. That's actually not why they're there.

Lorrie: No. It's their day job.

JC: Yeah, which is really interesting to me. To think about how that's how this is the major education of this entire population of people, and their school actually doesn't have a lot of... Yeah.

Lorrie: Then there's the difference between teachers who know that's not their primary reason and teachers who don't. She doesn't know. She thinks she was hired because she has substance to her.

JC: Ooh, that's interesting. The fact that she's up at the top of this tower and she never comes out...

Lorrie: Oh, God. Ouch.

JC: 'Yeah, yeah. Sure, we'll call... Yeah, sure, you can teach that. Yeah, great. Just stay up there in the tower.' Oh, my God. Yeah, that's amazing.

Lorrie: But yeah, Hermione puncturing that carefully sustained self-delusion... That's harsh.

JC: For sure. Of course we have... Was it Lavender and...

Lorrie: Parvati.

JC: Immediately afterwards saying, "Oh, you predicted this," and giving her a save there, which is sweet of them, but also like, 'Okay, yeah.' At the very end, we get another one here: "'Some day Hermione's having, eh?' Ron muttered to Harry, looking awed." There it is again. I'm like, 'Oh.' I do ship them, I have to say. They're very sweet.

Lorrie: Magnificent Hermione.

JC: 'She has layers I didn't know she had.' Yeah. Ooh.

Lorrie: This is how hard she usually keeps herself in check so that mere mortals can coexist with her, but when she's too tired to keep herself in check, this is what she really is. She's this powerful. And I love the political point: "She was usually last to leave the common room at night, first to arrive at the library the next morning; she had shadows like Lupin's under her eyes, and seemed constantly close to tears." She's suffering burnout. Whether you're a Muggle-born or whether you're a disabled werewolf, to try to keep up with what more privileged people can do easily... They're both overworked, they're both under-slept. That's just the toll that being oppressed takes on you, not only to try to keep up but also to have extra reserves to fight against the prejudice.

JC: Right, and we've talked about that before. We've talked about that in terms of Hermione's Muggle-born status. We've talked about that in terms of Lupin. We talked about Neville as being a metaphor for a disability.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And how the school does not do a good job of handling that either.

Lorrie: No.

JC: It's really interesting that this school is set in the 90s. Everything is set in the 90s in this series, but you can see... Okay, here's where my American background is going to come out again. By the 1990s in the United States, there were a lot more things put in place to make sure that this kind of stuff didn't happen. We were becoming much more conscious as a community of educators about things like supporting kids with disabilities, so in 1990, that was when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was passed; that's where we get IEPs and 504 plans, for people who are familiar with the ways that we work with students with disabilities in schools. I don't know anything about what was happening in Britain at the time, but my suspicion is that this is the author writing about her own school experience and how kids with disabilities would have experienced that. Not that we were doing it perfectly in the 90s. We're much better at it now, but in the 90s -- at the time that these books were happening -- it feels like it's taking place in a different time. It doesn't feel contemporary the way that these things are happening, that these different populations are experiencing school. There would be more attention paid to it by the faculty and staff, even if the students are not getting the support they need. There would be more attention paid to it, and the staff seem completely oblivious and even dismissive of struggles that students from these different groups have.

Lorrie: Since that was federal -- this act -- did that mean private schools in the U.S. were exempt from these accommodations?



JC: Yes. Private schools are exempt. It's the kind of thing that the federal government has done over and over again through the years where, if you accept federal funds for any reason, you have to abide by this new law. It's the same way they did speed limits, it's the same way they wrote Jim Crow, all those things. Supporting students with disabilities came through that same kind of philosophy of legislation of, "You get money from us, you've got to follow these rules."

Lorrie: Because that's the parallel that I was thinking here: that Hogwarts is operating like a private school in the U.S., where they have their own traditions, which hark back 40 years or more.

JC: And there's no regulation of who gets to teach and what their qualifications are, which is also the way private schools work. Yeah. Okay, well we definitely have gone off on a tangent there about schools and stuff.

Lorrie: And Hermione's troubles.

JC: And Hermione's troubles. One thing that I think is interesting, too, coming out of that, is that Ron takes over for Hermione in trying to figure out how to defend Buckbeak. I think he doesn't do a very good job, but the fact that he's suddenly going to step up and support...

Lorrie: He's grown up.

JC: Yeah, and he's looking at Hermione in a new light and he's thinking about his friendship with her. It's no longer this really childish, "Your cat killed my rat!" It's not that anymore.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Something shifted in him, and I think that's really interesting here.

Lorrie: Yeah. He's matured, and I like, too, that we get one new layer revealed in the Grim storyline. Harry gets to see in the early morning, 'Is there another Omen? Is there going to be a Grim? Is he fated for death again?' No. Maybe it can't be a Grim because the cat can see this dog. That changes things. So, the dog and Crookshanks are friends. Huh... Yeah, it's just a really beautiful time release of more information about that ongoing mystery. All right, Harry, you win. You get a little further on that.

JC: Before we get into the Quidditch match, there's a couple of other little interesting things in here. One is here we are at the school, where objectively learning is the most important thing we do, and it's all about magic, which is amazing. But somehow, sports still have the ability to distract everyone from what's actually important and what we're doing here. The fact that this whatever week -- it feels like a week -- before the Quidditch match, everything is about Quidditch. It's about that rivaling and it's about that tension. The teachers are feeling it, everybody's feeling it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's so interesting to me. It's like homecoming week at an American high school. There's all this big build up, except that it's all internal; it's not directed at the outside. Again, I'm finding that fascinating. There's this description of a "nasty incident" between a Slytherin and a Gryffindor, where at the end the students had leeks growing out of their ears.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Which I thought seemed so mild compared to what we know is coming. It was just funny.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Oh, they have leeks growing out of their ears! Haha!" No one's cast an Unforgivable on anyway else.

Lorrie: Oi, yai yai.

JC: It's so...

Lorrie: It's just spilling over everywhere, though.

JC: Spilling over, and you get the sense that the teachers are just barely hanging on, and they're like, 'God, let this week be over. Let this Quidditch game be over, and then we'll go back to normal,' like in a Texas high school.

Lorrie: Well, they're invested, too.

JC: Yeah, they're invested, too, but I'm just imagining it's like homecoming week at a high school when that Friday before the game, everybody's got the giant mums and are making noise and lighting up and distracting things. Every five minutes, someone comes in the classroom with some homecoming thing and the teacher's just like, 'Oh, my God, let this be over so we can get back to what we're supposed to be doing here.'

Lorrie: I'm going to want you to add for the show notes an explanation of mums and Texas high schools, because that's a whole cultural phenomenon.

JC: Yeah. It's a whole other thing. It's so true.

Lorrie: I did not go to a high school in the U.S., but even if I had... Unless you're in Texas, you don't know what this is, right?

JC: I think so. I think you would have to... Yeah. It's something that I think is a Texas thing, for sure.

Lorrie: Texas being its own country again.

JC: Oh, my God. Yeah. I don't know, I'm trying to think... On *Friday Night Lights*, did they show it? That's an old show from the 2000s. Maybe people who are listening to this remember that TV show, but I'm trying to think if they showed it on that. I can't remember.

Lorrie: So, the game...

JC: Oh, leading up to the game. So this part of the chapter... There's so much of this buildup and what Harry is thinking about; he has this dream about Quidditch, which seems very real, where he's riding on a dragon, which is really funny.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And I like that at breakfast, he notices that Malfoy looks paler than usual. That made me think about the fact that everything Harry has been going through preparing for this, Draco is also shouldering the hope of Slytherin in the same way, because he's... Yeah.

Lorrie: And his own.

JC: And he probably has very little confidence in himself at this point... for good reason.

Lorrie: For good reason.

JC: And it's also really interesting that it's the whole school against Slytherin.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Slytherin went into this match knowing that everybody in the school is rooting against them, that Gryffindor's Seeker has a Firebolt, that even the headmaster of the school is supporting the other team, and they go in knowing that they're a long shot. That would suck. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Not only does it suck, but he thought he had an advantage. He started out with an advantage at the beginning because the whole team had fancier brooms, and even that got taken from him with the Firebolt. The worst for Draco is that he knows he's the weak link on the team.

JC: Oof. Ow.

Lorrie: Yeah. I had understood *Prisoner of Azkaban* to be the book where everybody gets something they want except Snape, but that's my blind spot about the kids. No, no, Draco has just as bad of a year as Snape.

JC: He doesn't even get Buckbeak killed in the end.

Lorrie: No!

JC: He doesn't even get that.

Lorrie: He gets a little bit of a win when he gets to fake that his injury is really bad, but pretty much everything he's trying to do just... He's in a minor league.

JC: And then we get to the game itself, which is the first time -- despite what we've heard about Quidditch -- we've heard all these references to, "Oh, it's so dirty and it's so violent." This is the first time I think we've truly seen a violent, dirty game.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It's very interesting, and that there seems to be nothing anyone can do. Well, part of it, I think, too, is that there's no referees. There's not a set of referees. I'm thinking about, again, in high school sports where you've got a team of people who are on the field watching everyone; of course they don't catch everything, and the kids are always trying to sneak in a thing they're not supposed to do.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But the fact that there's not really... There's maybe one person. I think it's just Madam Hooch. There's just one official in Quidditch.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And... Yeah.

Lorrie: You can't stop this from happening.

JC: And then it's not a field. It's a 3D space that they're in, so you can't see what's happening God knows how far away. Yeah. It's set up to be violent and for cheating to be rampant, and we get to see a lot of it.

Lorrie: Well, the thing is I don't think it's cheating. I think they have calculated the cost of violating the rules and realize that it's quite affordable.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: If you're going to try to pull an opposing player off their broom instead of actually playing the game, the worst thing that happens is that the other team gets a penalty kick.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Well, you can afford that.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, no, exactly. That seems to be the only penalty, is that the other team gets a shot. Ugh....

Lorrie: Yeah. And if everyone's doing it, then the blizzard of fouls can just get huger and huger. What's anyone going to do about it?

JC: Right, for sure.

Lorrie: But yeah, I love the line, "It was... the dirtiest game Harry had ever played in..." because that's fun.

JC: And it highlights the role of Quidditch as just a way for everyone to blow off steam.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The whole school is into it, there's all this tension; then after this, someone will have won, someone will have lost, but everyone will go back to, "Okay, that's over. We got that out of our systems."

Lorrie: Yeah. Something is going to be settled by this game.

JC: Yeah, for sure. There's all these moments where obviously Lee Jordan's commentary is very biased, and McGonagall keeps trying to rein him in until...

Lorrie: Until she loses it.

JC: Madam Hooch gets angry and oh, my gosh. Okay, so it's when Lee Jordan says, "YOU CHEATING SCUM!" He's yelling out, "YOU FILTHY, CHEATING B--" (something that starts with a B). "Professor McGonagall didn't bother to tell him off. She was... shaking her finger in Malfoy's direction," and she was also shouting furiously, which is really funny.

Lorrie: That's one of the cutest character traits of McGonagall.

JC: Yeah. She's so into Quidditch.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: The rule-breaking that Slytherin and Gryffindor are doing is completely equal on both sides.

JC: And we're seeing it from Lee Jordan's very pro-Gryffindor perspective.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You see this in sports all the time at every level. Even at the kids' level, where kids are explicitly told, "These are the rules and here's how you get around them, or if you're going to do this, do it like this so that you increase your chances of tricking the official into thinking something else happened." It varies from sport to sport, but it's really common to think, 'Okay, what's the worst thing that'll happen? We'll get a five-yard penalty. Okay. Do the thing where you might actually injure their quarterback. Yeah, give it a try.' Yeah.

Lorrie: I think knowing that that's a fixture of how competition and how school can work made this just more fun to read.

JC: Yeah, because it's taking that stuff that we all know happens and ramping it up, and then saying, "Yeah, that's what happens, even in this magical world."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "It happens the same way."

Lorrie: Oh, poor Draco.

JC: It is interesting that we don't see more hexing during these games than we do. We know that Harry had his wand and he had it hidden in his uniform at the previous game when he cast the Patronus, but he can't be the only person who's got a wand out there.

Lorrie: I guess that's a pretty strict rule: any magic you do can't be affecting the gameplay.

JC: Yeah, I've never read *Quidditch Through The Ages*. I have no idea what the rules are.

Lorrie: Oh, it's been decades. So... Draco. Oh, Draco.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Draco has a terrible match. Oh, this is so shameful, Draco.

JC: Oh, yeah. He almost has the Snitch at the end, and then Harry is on a faster broom at the end of the day.

Lorrie: And Draco is "miles ahead", and he thinks he's got it. He's all happy and excited because he's gaining on the Snitch.

JC: He's going to finally do the thing. He's going to beat Harry Potter, and he's going to bring glory back to Slytherin, all this stuff.

Lorrie: His father might give him back his allowance. Yeah.

JC: Exactly. His father might actually pat him on the shoulder and say, "I'm proud of you son," or whatever Draco wants to hear.

Lorrie: "I guess you're a Malfoy after all."

JC: Yeah, exactly. And no, it doesn't happen.

Lorrie: No. No. The way that Harry beats him is so iconic that Harry... He's just a better athlete. He takes both his hands off the broom and reaches for it and gets it. Draco should have gotten that.

JC: Oh, yeah, let's see. I'm looking at it here. "Harry urged the Firebolt downwards, but Malfoy was miles ahead -- 'Go! Go! Go!' Harry urged his broom. They were gaining on Malfoy -- Harry flattened himself to the broom handle as Bole sent a Bludger at him -- he was at Malfoy's ankles -- he was level -- Harry threw himself forwards, taking both hands off his broom. He knocked Malfoy's arm out of the way and -- 'YES!'"

Lorrie: Oh, God, poor Malfoy.

JC: "The tiny golden ball was held tight in his fist, beating its wings hopelessly against his fingers." Yes, and everybody's like, "AHHHHHHH!" Yeah. The author does not show what happened to the Slytherins; we only see the Gryffindors. We don't see the Slytherins doing the thing where the hockey team that loses the Stanley Cup collapses to the ice and sobs. We're not seeing that, right?

Lorrie: Ouch. Ouch.

JC: Yeah, we don't see what happens when they go back to the common room. Did anyone comfort Malfoy, or do they all give him the cold shoulder? Yeah. I have no idea what happened after this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But what we see is that the Gryffindor team is crying when Harry has won this game for them. They're embracing him, and this is when he says, "Okay, I could cast the world's best Patronus."

JC: Which he's going to do in a few chapters.

Lorrie: Yeah. Learn the skills you need to survive by doing what you love.

JC: It really... We talked about this at the very beginning: this idea that for Harry, this is one thing that he has that is really his own and how important that is. When I think about the students I've worked with, I think about my own kid. I think about my kid's friends. How important it is for a kid to have a thing that they are good at and that they know they're good at.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And it can be different things for different kids. It can be... My son has a friend who competes internationally in Smash Brothers tournaments and is really, really good.

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: To have that thing that you're good at.... Oh, my gosh, it does so much for your... Again, we talked about identity at the beginning. To have an identity as, "I am a person who is capable of something."

Lorrie: Yes, your identity.

JC: "I'm good at this thing. I'm really good at guitar playing, I'm a really good artist, I'm really good in debate." Whatever it is, it's really important for kids to have that, and I love that we get to see Harry have that here.

Lorrie: So the factor that's odd here is that he has this Firebolt and he did nothing to earn it. It just fell from the skies.

JC: True.

Lorrie: And that's part of his exceptionalism as the Chosen One. He is both drastically disadvantaged (compared to most kids) and also bizarrely privileged; that's not unusual, I think, for kids who are in this bizarre position that Harry's in of being some sort of child of destiny. This happens in schools with real kids, where there's some kid where they are both way worse off and way better off in some way than your average kid. Well, is it fair that he gets a Firebolt? The unfair thing is all of the kids who are just as exceptional and just as special who never get any advantage. On the other hand, what do we do as a society when we collectively owe a child who doesn't have anyone in his corner? What do we do to make it up to that kid that they have these really unusual traumas? How do we help them become who they are? Well, they're not going to be normal anyway. If there's a kid who's really disadvantaged and also pretty special and is going to have some significant challenges, yeah, whatever you can provide for that kid, they're going to need different things. They're not going to need the same kind of things that most kids need. Is it going to be unfair if they get a lot more resources? I don't know what's fair, what's unfair.

JC: Yeah. We talk a lot about the difference between equity and equality, that equality is when everyone gets the same thing and equity is when you get what you need to be successful and it looks different from what someone else needs. So, is it equitable that Harry got a Firebolt when everyone else had these other kinds of brooms? No, but...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's an argument to be made there that Sirius gave him the Firebolt to make up for the fact that Sirius wasn't there for him. That was what his reasoning was: "I couldn't give you the things I should have because I've been in prison this whole time, but here's a symbol of what I would like to have given you."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Giving him the Firebolt was... Yes, it's an unfair advantage for Harry, but also it's trying to make up for all of the stuff you didn't get.

Lorrie: There's also the ostentation of someone being honored for something that's really awful, which does happen. For example, every year you get stories of high school seniors who get a full scholarship to some prestigious college because of something really, really tragic in their past, which they somehow were able to keep at bay enough to perform well. The part of the reward that they're getting is, "Wow, you were able to concentrate enough to keep up your grades, considering how much grief or stress you were under, and it's great." But why are we celebrating because something happened to that kid originally that nobody deserves, some terrible thing that nobody deserves to have happened to them? I remember this one kid who

survived a near fatal car accident and got a really big award graduating from high school, but it was basically a "Yay, you didn't die" award, which is what he called it. Yes, everything he struggled through to make it to graduation, he knew that's what they were acknowledging. But wow, it would have been great to not have to do that at all.

JC: Right, yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, Harry getting this huge, ostentatious, problematic gift: it is calling attention to how unusual the measures have to be to raise this kid. But no, nothing he can do is normal, and yet he had a great game.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And Malfoy should have gotten that Snitch! Oh. my God... So, the next chapter after this is called Professor Trelawney's Prediction.

JC: Ooh. Oh, my goodness.

Lorrie: Things are about to change.

JC: I'm just looking at the names of the chapters coming up. Oh, we're a few chapters away from the one called Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs, which I'm very excited about getting to.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. So I guess Harry winning this game... His preparations for the end of the year are complete. He has grown. He has now gathered everything he needs to face what's coming.

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: Final exams are about to start for Harry Potter.

JC: Yep, yep, yep. Very exciting. This is still my favorite book of the series. As we're reading it, I'm reminded of why it was my favorite, and I'm excited to get through the rest of this one.

Lorrie: Even though your favorite Draco and my favorite Snape are having a miserable year.

JC: Having a miserable year. It's a character-building year for them... A very formative year for both of them, for sure.

Lorrie: Yikes, yeah. Well, I'm sure neither of them wants to relive it.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I will talk to you then.

JC: All right!

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at [HPAfter2020.com](http://HPAfter2020.com). There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts and more. If you like what you heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.