



April 26, 2004

Dear Readers,

What a happy surprise to learn that Loser has won the Maine Student Book Award. I used to think that having lobster in Ogunquit was the highlight of my experience in your wonderful state, but this tops it. Thank you!

When I decided to create a character called Zinkoff, I was inspired by a poem by Grantland Rice:

"When the One Great Scorer comes
To mark against your name
He writes not that you won or lost
But how you played the game."

Such is the true definition of a winner: one who participates, who tries his or her best. Which makes all of you winners, not because of who you voted for, but because you "played the game"—you read a book.

And to that Zinkoff would throw up his arms and cheer: "Yahoo!"

Your friend,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Spinelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Jerry Spinelli