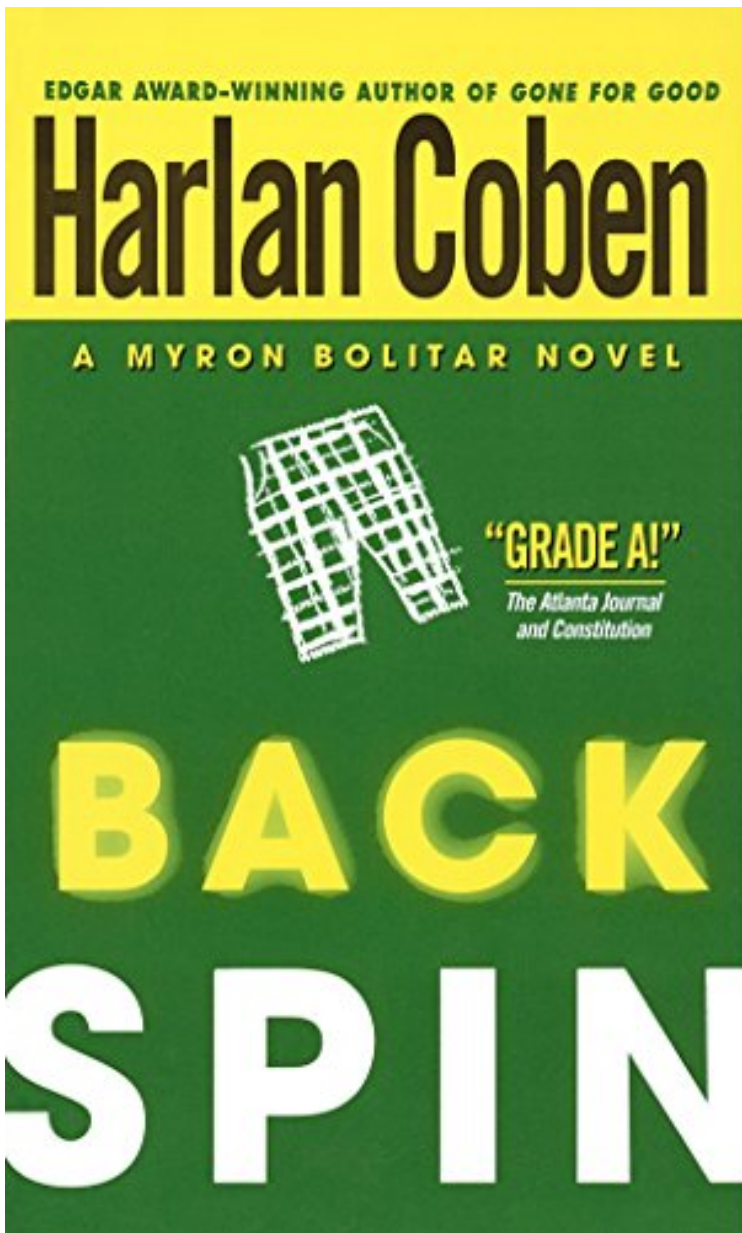


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Back Spin: A Myron Bolitar Novel



Par Harlan Coben

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurKidnappers have snatched the teenage son of super-star golfer Linda Coldren and her husband, Jack, an aging pro, at the height of the U.S. Open. To help get the boy back, sports agent Myron Bolitar goes charging after clues and suspects from the Main Line mansions to a downtown cheaters' motel-- and back in time to a U.S. Open twenty-three years ago, when Jack Coldren should have won, but didn't. Suddenly Myron finds him self surrounded by blue bloods, criminals, and liars. And as one family's darkest secrets explode into murder, Myron finds out just how rough this game can get.In novels that crackle with

wit and suspense, Edgar Award winner Harlan Coben has created one of the most fascinating and complex heroes in suspense fiction--Myron Bolitar--a hotheaded, tenderhearted sports agent who grows more and more engaging and unpredictable with each page-turning appearance. From the Paperback edition. Extrait Myron Bolitar used a cardboard periscope to look over the suffocating throngs of ridiculously clad spectators. He tried to recall the last time he'd actually used a toy periscope, and an image of sending in proof-of-purchase seals from a box of Cap'n Crunch cereal flickered in front of him like headache-inducing sunspots. Through the mirrored reflection, Myron watched a man dressed in knickers--knickers, for crying out loud--stand over a tiny white sphere. The ridiculously clad spectators mumbled excitedly. Myron stifled a yawn. The knickered man crouched. The ridiculously clad spectators jostled and then settled into an eerie silence. Sheer stillness followed, as if even the trees and shrubs and well-coiffed blades of grass were holding their collective breath. Then the knickered man whacked the white sphere with a stick. The crowd began to murmur in the indistinguishable syllables of backstage banter. As the ball ascended, so did the volume of the murmurs. Words could be made out. Then phrases. "Lovely golf stroke." "Super golf shot." "Beautiful golf shot." "Truly fine golf stroke." They always said golf stroke, like someone might mistake it for a swim stroke, or--as Myron was currently contemplating in this blazing heat--a sunstroke. "Mr. Bolitar?" Myron took the periscope away from his eyes. He was tempted to yell "Up periscope," but feared some at stately, snooty Merion Golf Club would view the act immature. Especially during the U.S. Open. He looked down at a ruddy-faced man of about seventy. "Your pants," Myron said. "Pardon me?" "You're afraid of getting hit by a golf cart, right?" They were orange and yellow in a hue slightly more luminous than a bursting supernova. To be fair, the man's clothing hardly stood out. Most in the crowd seemed to have woken up wondering what apparel they possessed that would clash with, say, the free world. Orange and green tints found exclusively in several of your tackiest neon signs adorned many. Yellow and some strange shades of purple were also quite big--usually together--like a color scheme rejected by a Midwest high school cheerleading squad. It was as if being surrounded by all this God-given natural beauty made one want to do all in his power to offset it. Or maybe there was something else at work here. Maybe the ugly clothes had a more functional origin. Maybe in the old days, when animals roamed free, golfers dressed this way to ward off dangerous wildlife. Good theory. "I need to speak with you," the elderly man whispered. "It's urgent." The rounded, jovial cheeks belied his pleading eyes. He suddenly gripped Myron's forearm. "Please," he added. "What's this about?" Myron asked. The man made a movement with his neck, like his collar was on too tight. "You're a sports agent, right?" "Yes." "You're here to find clients?" Myron narrowed his eyes. "How do you know I'm not here to witness the enthralling spectacle of grown men taking a walk?" The old man did not smile, but then again, golfers were not known for their sense of humor. He craned his neck again and moved closer. His whisper was hoarse. "Do you know the name Jack Coldren?" he asked. "Sure," Myron said. If the old man had asked the same question yesterday, Myron wouldn't have had a clue. He didn't follow golf that closely (or at all), and Jack Coldren had been little more than a journeyman over the past twenty years or so. But Coldren had been the surprise leader after the U.S. Open's first day, and now, with just a few holes remaining in the second round, Coldren was up by a commanding eight strokes. "What about him?" "And Linda Coldren?" the man asked. "Do you know who she is?" This one was easier. Linda Coldren was Jack's wife and far and away the top female golfer of the past decade. "Yeah, I know who she is," Myron said. The man leaned in closer and did the neck thing again. Seriously annoying--not to mention contagious. Myron found himself fighting off the desire to mimic the movement. "They're in deep trouble," the old man whispered. "If you help them, you'll have two new clients." "What sort of trouble?" The old man looked around. "Please," he said. "There are too many people. Come with me." Myron shrugged. No reason not to go. The old man was the only lead he'd unearthed since his friend and business associate Windsor Horne Lockwood III--Win, for short--had dragged his sorry butt down here. Being that the U.S. Open was at Merion--home course of the Lockwood family for something like a billion years--Win had felt it would be a great opportunity for Myron to land a few choice clients. Myron wasn't quite so sure. As near as he could tell, the major component separating him from the hordes of other locust-like agents swarming the green meadows of Merion Golf Club was his naked aversion for golf. Probably not a key selling point to the faithful. Myron Bolitar ran MB SportsReps, a sports representation firm located on Park Avenue in New York City. He rented the space from his former college roommate, Win, a Waspy, old-money, big-time investment banker whose family owned Lock-Home Securities on the same Park Avenue in New York. Myron handled the negotiations while Win, one of the country's most respected brokers, handled the investments and finances. The other member of the MB team, Esperanza Diaz, handled everything else.

Three branches with checks and balances Just like the American government. Very patriotic.Slogan: MB SportsReps--the other guys are commie pinkos.As the old man ushered Myron through the crowd, several men in green blazers--another look sported mostly at golf courses, perhaps to camouflage oneself against the grass--greeted him with whispered, "How do, Bucky," or "Looking good, Buckster," or "Fine day for golf, Buckaroo." They all had the accent of the rich and preppy, the kind of inflection where mommy is pronounced "mummy" and summer and winter are verbs. Myron was about to comment on a grown man being called Bucky, but when your name is Myron, well, glass houses and stones and all that;Like every other sporting event in the free world, the actual playing area looked more like a giant billboard than a field of competition. The leader board was sponsored by IBM. Canon handed out the periscopes. American Airlines employees worked the food stands (an airline handling food--what think tank came up with that one?). Corporate Row was jam-packed with companies who shelled out over one hundred grand a pop to set up a tent for a few days, mostly so that company executives had an excuse to go. Travelers Group, Mass Mutual, Aetna (golfers must like insurance), Canon, Heublein. Heublein. What the hell was a Heublein? They looked like a nice company. Myron would probably buy a Heublein if he knew what one was.The funny thing was, the U.S. Open was actually less commercialized than most tourneys. At least they hadn't sold their name yet. Other tournaments were named for sponsors and the names had gotten a little silly. Who could get up for winning the JC Penney Open or the Michelob Open or even the Wendy's Three-Tour Challenge?The old man led him to a primo parking lot. Mercedeses, Caddies, limos. Myron spotted Win's Jaguar. The USGA had recently put up a sign that read MEMBERS PARKING ONLY.Myron said, "You're a member of Merion." Dr. Deduction.The old man twisted the neck thing into something approaching a nod. "My family dates back to Merion's inception," he said, the snooty accent now more pronounced. "Just like your friend Win."Myron stopped and looked at the man. "You know Win?"The old man sort of smiled and shrugged. No commitment."You haven't told me your name yet," Myron said."Stone Buckwell," he said, hand extended. "Everyone calls me Bucky."Myron shook the hand."I'm also Linda Coldren's father," he added.Bucky unlocked a sky-blue Cadillac and they slid inside. He put the key in the ignition. The radio played Muzak--worse, the Muzak version of "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head." Myron quickly opened the window for air, not to mention noise.Only members were allowed to park on the Merion grounds, so it wasn't too much of a hassle getting out. They made a right at the end of the driveway and then another right. Bucky mercifully flipped off the radio Myron stuck his head back in the car."What do you know about my daughter and her husband?" Bucky asked."Not much.""You are not a golf fan, are you, Mr. Bolitar?" "Not really.""Golf is truly a magnificent sport," he said. Then he added, "Though the word sport does not begin to do it justice.""Uh-huh," Myron said."It's the game of princes." Buckwell's ruddy face glowed a bit now, the eyes wide with the same type of rapture one saw in the very religious. His voice was low and awed. "There is nothing quite like it, you know. You alone against the course. No excuses. No teammate. No bad calls. It's the purest of activities.""Uh-huh," Myron said again. "Look, I don't want to appear rude, Mr. Buckwell, but what's this all about?" "Please call me Bucky." "Okay. Bucky."He nodded his approval. "I understand that you and Windsor Lockwood are more than business associates," he said."Meaning?" "I understand you two go back a long way. College roommates, am I correct?" "Why do you keep asking about Win?" "I actually came to the club to find him," Bucky said. "But I think it's better this way." "What way?" "Talking to you first. Maybe after...well, we'll see. Shouldn't hope for too much."Myron nodded. "I have no idea what you're talking about."Bucky turned onto a road adjacent to the course called Golf House Road. Golfers were so creative.The course was on the right, imposing mansions on the left. A minute later, Bucky pulled into a circular driveway. The house was fairly big and made of something called river rock. River rock was big in this area, though Win always referred to it as "Mainline Stone." There was a white fence and lots of tulips and two maple trees, one on each side of the front walk. A large porch was enclosed on the right side. The car came to a stop, and for a moment neither of them moved."What's this all about, Mr. Buckwell?" "We have a situation here," he said."What kind of situation?" "I'd rather let my daughter explain it to you." He grabbed the key out of the ignition and reached for the door."Why come to me?" Myron asked."We were told you could possibly help." "Who told you that?"Buckwell started rolling his neck with greater fervor. His head looked like it'd been attached by a loose ball socket. When he finally got it under control, he managed to look Myron in the eyes."Win's mother," he said.Myron stiffened. His heart plummeted down a dark shaft. He opened his mouth, closed it, waited. Buckwell got out of the car and headed for the door. Ten seconds later, Myron followed. Buckwell nodded. "That's why I came to you first." They followed a brick path to a door slightly ajar. Buckwell pushed it open. "Linda?" Linda Coldren stood before a television in the den Her

white shorts and sleeveless yellow blouse revealed the lithe, toned limbs of an athlete. She was tall with short spunky black hair and a tan that accentuated the smooth, long muscles. The lines around her eyes and mouth placed her in her late thirties, and he could see instantly why she was a commercial darling. There was a fierce splendor to this woman, a beauty derived from a sense of strength rather than delicacy. She was watching the tournament on the television. On top of the set were framed family photographs. Big, pillowy couches formed a V in one corner. Tactfully furnished, for a golfer. No putting green, AstroTurf carpet.

None of that golf artwork that seemed a step or two below the aesthetic class of, say, paintings of dogs playing poker. No cap with a tee and ball on the brim hanging from a moose head. Linda Coldren suddenly swung her line of vision toward them, firing a glare past Myron before settling on her father. "I thought you were going to get Jack," she snapped. "He hasn't finished the round yet." She motioned to the television. "He's on eighteen now. I thought you were going to wait for him." "I got Mr. Bolitar instead." "Who?" Myron stepped forward and smiled. "I'm Myron Bolitar." Linda Coldren flicked her eyes at him, then back to her father. "Who the hell is he?" "He's the man Cissy told me about," Buckwell said. "Who's Cissy?" Myron asked. "Win's mother." "Oh," Myron said. "Right." Linda Coldren said, "I don't want him here. Get rid of him." "Linda, listen to me. We need help." "Not from him." "He and Win have experience with this type of thing." "Win," she said slowly, "is psychotic." "Ah," Myron said. "Then you know him well?" Linda Coldren finally turned her attention to Myron. Her eyes, deep and brown, met his. "I haven't spoken to Win since he was eight years old," she said. "But you don't have to leap into a pit of flames to know it's hot." Myron nodded. "Nice analogy." She shook her head and looked back at her father. "I told you before: no police. We do what they say." "But he's not police," her father said. "And you shouldn't be telling anyone." "I only told my sister," Bucky protested. "She'd never say anything." Myron felt his body stiffen again. "Wait a second," he said to Bucky. "Your sister is Win's mother?" "Yes." "You're Win's uncle." He looked at Linda Coldren. "And you're Win's first cousin." Linda Coldren looked at him like he'd just peed on the floor. "With smarts like that," she said, "I'm glad you're on our side." "Everyone's a wiseass." "If it's still unclear, Mr. Bolitar, I could break out some poster board and sketch a family tree for you." "Could you use lots of pretty colors?" Myron said. "I like pretty colors." She made a face and turned away. On the television, Jack Coldren lined up a twelve-foot putt. Linda stopped--and watched. He tapped it; the ball took off and arched right into the hole. The gallery applauded with modest enthusiasm. Jack picked up the ball with two fingers and then tipped his hat. The IBM leader board flashed on the 3 screen. Jack Coldren was up by a whopping nine strokes. Linda Coldren shook her head. "Poor bastard." Myron kept still. So did Bucky. "He's waited twenty-three years for this moment," she continued. "And he picks now." Myron glanced at Bucky. Bucky glanced back, shaking his head. Linda Coldren stared at the television until her husband exited to the clubhouse. Then she took a deep breath and looked at Myron. "You see, Mr. Bolitar, Jack has never won a professional tournament. The closest he ever came was in his rookie year twenty-three years ago, when he was only nineteen. It was the last time the U.S. Open was held at Merion. You may remember the headlines. "They were not altogether unfamiliar. This morning's papers had rehashed it a bit. "He lost a lead, right?" Linda Coldren made a scoffing sound. "That's a bit of an understatement, but yes. Since then, his career has been completely unspectacular. There were years he didn't even Revue de presse Sharp plotting and emotional density, as well as non-stop wise-cracks ... The characters are deftly etched and the details keenly observed (Publishers Weekly) The fourth installment in Harlan Coben's stellar mystery series is another winner, one sure to widen the appeal of this consistently funny and perceptive writer (The Atlanta Journal and Constitution)