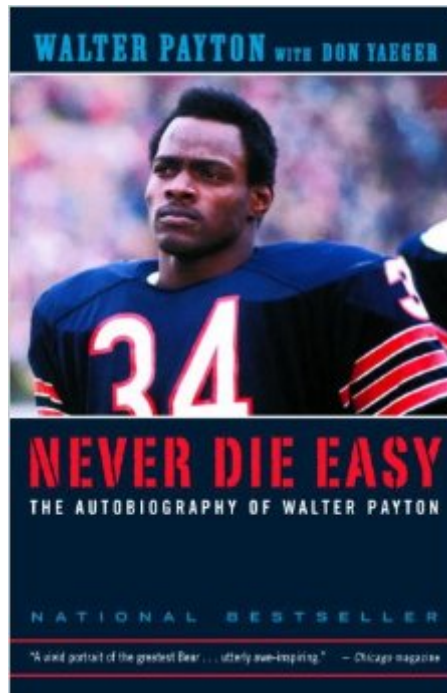


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# Never Die Easy: The Autobiography Of Walter Payton



## Synopsis

"Never die easy. Why run out of bounds and die easy? Make that linebacker pay. It carries into all facets of your life. It's okay to lose, to die, but don't die without trying, without giving it your best." His legacy is towering. Walter Payton—the man they called Sweetness, for the way he ran—remains the most prolific running back in the history of the National Football League, the star of the Chicago Bears' only Super Bowl Championship, eleven times voted the most popular sports figure in Chicago's history. Off the field, he was a devoted father whose charitable foundation benefited tens of thousands of children each year, and who—faced with terminal liver disease—refused to use his celebrity to gain a preferential position for organ donation. Walter Payton was not just a football hero; he was America's hero. **Never Die Easy** is Walter Payton's autobiography, told from the heart. Growing up poor in Mississippi, he took up football to get girls' attention, and went on to become a Black College All-American at tiny Jackson State (during which time he was also a finalist in a Soul Train dance contest). Drafted by the Bears in 1975, he predicted that he would last only five years but went on to play thirteen extraordinary seasons, a career earning him regular acknowledgment as one of the greatest players in the history of professional football. And when his playing days were over, he approached business and charity endeavors with the same determination and success he had brought to the football field, always putting first his devotion to friends and family. His ultimate battle with illness truly proved him the champion he always had been and prompted a staggering outpouring of love and support from hundreds of thousands of friends and admirers. **Written** with veteran journalist and author Don Yaeger in the last weeks of Walter Payton's life, **Never Die Easy** presents Walter's singular voice—warm, plainspoken, funny, self-aware—along with the voices of the friends, family, teammates, and business associates who knew him best at all stages of his life, including his wife, Connie, and their children, Brittney and Jarrett; his teammate and friend Matt Suhey; former Bears head coach Mike Ditka; and many, many others. **Walter** made Don Yaeger promise that his book would be "inspirational and leave people with some kind of lesson . . . and make sure you spell all the words right." **Never Die Easy** keeps all those promises.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you think this is just the typical sports biography containing the typical boasts about on-the-field exploits and off-the-field hi-jinx, remember the subject is Walter Payton, and think again. This book is not even a sports biography. It's a life story, and by that I mean, a story about life. To linger or dwell on what Walter did on the gridiron would be to minimize and trivialize what he accomplished in life, and I say this realizing that he was one of the two greatest football players ever. The book is an easy, informative, and interesting read. You learn about his life in football, but the book is not a study in X's and O's. Instead you learn of Walter's work ethic, his compassion and empathy for others, his fun-loving ways, his sensitivity, his selflessness, his toughness, and his courage, to list only some. He operated a philanthropic foundation that reached out to millions in his lifetime. He anonymously distributed hundreds of thousands of toys at Christmastime. Even after he became gravely ill, he campaigned for greater awareness of the need for organ donors. And he raised two children who have become promising young adults, which he felt was his greatest accomplishment. Walter Payton inspired millions of his fans by giving his all on every play, and he lived his life off of the gridiron the way he did on it: he went all out and made the most of it. That the book was finished in an oral-history style, is fitting. It was never like Walter Payton to talk a lot about himself. Credit is due to his family members and friends, for being so open about their feelings about the man. The book has the ring of the absolute truth. It has been written: "Show me a hero, and I'll write you a tragedy." This book is anything but that. Like the man they called "Sweetness," *Never Die Easy* is an inspiration. The tragedy rests with our society, which lost this great hero of humanity at such a young age.

I consider Walter Payton to be one of my childhood heroes, primarily from his unparalleled feats on the football field and his "Never Die Easy" attitude as a Chicago Bear. This excellently written biography not only reaffirmed my childhood adoration, but added to my perspective of what a truly

inspirational human being he was. His tireless efforts in charity, his down to earth charm and genuine love and respect for his fans, his legendary work ethic, his bold business ventures, and especially, his brave fight against the liver condition which claimed his life are all described brilliantly through his own observations as well as those closest to him. In short, this book convinced me that my childhood sports hero will always be an inspiration to me as an adult. I recommend this book and its powerful message to all readers, regardless of your familiarity with Mr. Payton. Thanks for giving so much, Walter, we'll miss you.

When I get depressed, when I complain about my life, and when I think people owe me something, I think of Walter Payton. Then I think of never giving up, always taking advantage of each day's opportunities, and being truly thankful for each breath I take. That was the Walter Payton way of living. Most of the book is penned by Payton, but several parts are written by members of his family as well as friends and coaches, such as Matt Suey and Mike Ditka. Walter's entire life is represented here, from his early days in Columbia, Mississippi to the Chicago Bears to the illness that led to his death at such a young age. To say that the story is inspiring is like saying the sun is a pretty good light. This is one of the most inspiring books I have read in a long, long time. It will have an effect on all who read it. You don't have to be a football fan to appreciate and enjoy the book. Just a regular, ordinary person - that's the way Walter saw himself. After you've finished the book, don't be surprised if you start looking at life differently. You might start thinking more positively. You might start spending more time on things that really matter: your family, your friends, helping other people. Like I said, don't be surprised. Walter Payton was a class act in every way imaginable. If you don't believe it, look at most of the guys playing pro football today. How many of them are in it for the team and not for themselves? How many of them credit the people around them and not themselves? How many of them praise others' ability and not their own? How many of them can stay out of trouble and avoid scandal? Today's players could learn a lot from Walter Payton. So could regular people like you and me. Thank goodness God was pleased to send us Walter Payton. Read the book and you'll understand how special the man was and how he continues to bless lives after his death. A must-read.

The theme of this book could be that while it is important to "Never Die Easy" it is perhaps even more important to be humble about your success. When Walter Payton died, I felt like I had lost a friend. I cried at the news, and at the same time felt odd about doing so. I never met Walter Payton. However, I followed his career, game by game for 13 years, and those years represented most of

my young adult life. I always admired his tenacity, his sheer determination, and his unsurpassed skill on the football field. Every single play was a joy to watch. No one before or since played with that level of intensity on every down, every game. But what was even more impressive than that was his approach to life. When Walter broke the NFL all-time rushing record, he said "this is for all of those who tried and didn't make it". Even more amazing in this era of spoiled athletes was that Walter meant those words, and lived them. Greatness and humility are a rare combination in professional sports. What we see throughout this book, in his own words and those by others, is that in spite of all his records and his success, he got up every day and gave it his all. The book itself covers his childhood in rural Mississippi through his professional career and to his early death due to liver cancer. The book is not written in the first person, which is disappointing, but understood in that it was written after he died. It is a series of paragraphs and reflections by different people who knew him, and by Walter himself. I recommend buying and reading this book. You will see a person who was truly the best football player of all-time, and at the same time was everything you would want a man to be - a caring father, loving husband since he was 20, a humble teammate and someone who never, ever quit and had a work ethic most can only dream of. A look at some great life lessons and awesome principles to live by. I am still inspired by his approach.

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