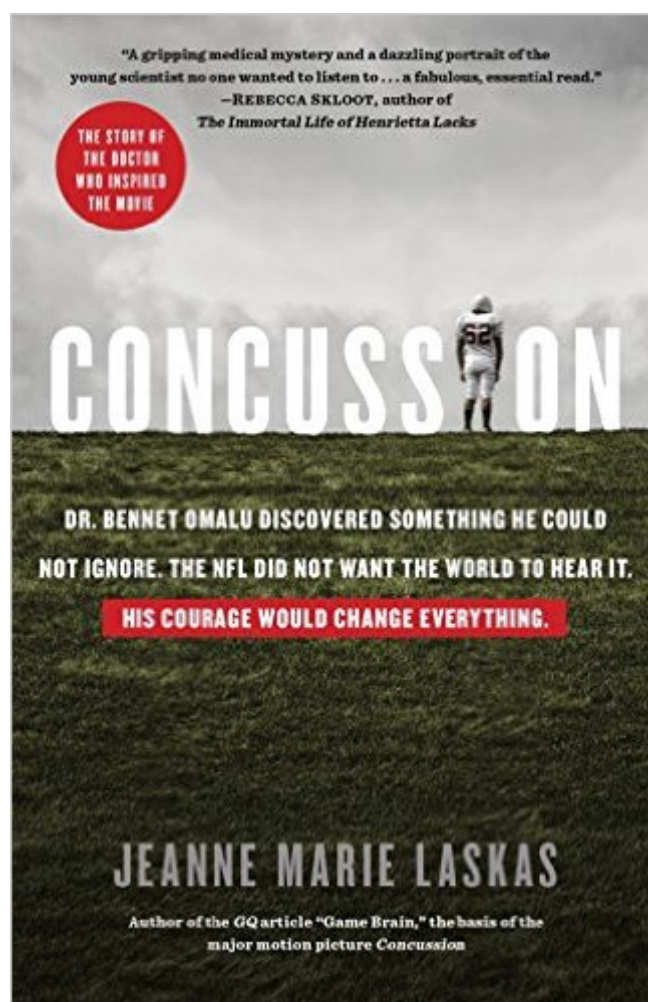


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# Concussion



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • Now a major motion picture starring Will Smith, *Concussion* is the riveting, unlikely story of Dr. Bennet Omalu, the pathologist who made one of the most significant medical discoveries of the twenty-first century, a discovery that challenges the existence of America's favorite sport and puts Omalu in the crosshairs of football's most powerful corporation: the NFL. • Jeanne Marie Laskas first met the young forensic pathologist Dr. Bennet Omalu in 2009, while reporting a story for *GQ* that would go on to inspire the movie *Concussion*. Omalu told her about a day in September 2002, when, in a dingy morgue in downtown Pittsburgh, he picked up a scalpel and made a discovery that would rattle America in ways he'd never intended. Omalu was new to America, chasing the dream, a deeply spiritual man escaping the wounds of civil war in Nigeria. The body on the slab in front of him belonged to a fifty-year-old named Mike Webster, aka "Iron Mike," a Hall of Fame center for the Pittsburgh Steelers, one of the greatest ever to play the game. After retiring in 1990, Webster had suffered a dizzyingly steep decline. Toward the end of his life, he was living out of his van, tasing himself to relieve his chronic pain, and fixing his rotting teeth with Super Glue. How did this happen?, Omalu asked himself. How did a young man like Mike Webster end up like this? The search for answers would change Omalu's life forever and put him in the crosshairs of one of the most powerful corporations in America: the National Football League. What Omalu discovered in Webster's brain "proof that Iron Mike's mental deterioration was no accident but a disease caused by blows to the head that could affect everyone playing the game" was the one truth the NFL wanted to ignore. • Taut, gripping, and gorgeously told, *Concussion* is the stirring story of one unlikely man's decision to stand up to a multibillion-dollar colossus, and to tell the world the truth. • Advance praise for *Concussion* • "A gripping medical mystery and a dazzling portrait of the young scientist no one wanted to listen to . . . a fabulous, essential read." • "Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* • The story of Dr. Bennet Omalu's battle against the NFL is classic David and Goliath stuff, and Jeanne Marie Laskas "one of my favorite writers on earth" makes it as exciting as any great courtroom or gridiron drama. A riveting, powerful human tale "and a master class on how to tell a story." • "Charles Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit* • "Bennet Omalu forced football to reckon with head trauma. The NFL doesn't want you to hear his story, but Jeanne Marie Laskas makes it unforgettable. This book is gripping, eye-opening, and full of heart." • "Emily Bazelon, author of *Sticks and Stones*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You don't have to enjoy football to appreciate Concussion, the riveting new biography of Bennet Omalu, the Nigerian neurological pathologist that discovered CTE, a type of permanent brain damage caused by repetitive concussions, such as that experienced by football players. Not only the content, but the engaging voice with which it is told, make it worth everyone's while. I was fortunate enough to read it free, courtesy of Net Galley and Random House, but when it comes out Tuesday, November 24, I recommend you get a copy for yourself. It's information everyone really ought to have, especially those that play American football, or have family members that do. As for me, several years ago the middle school where I taught was rocked by the news that a young man we had taught had been killed on the football field while playing for the high school next door to us. DeShawn had died in a way the Seattle Times assured its readers was unheard of, a terrible tragedy with little explanation other than that of the coroner, who said he died of a traumatic brain injury. Our in-house football coach, whose frustrated students were stuck playing the "dumb", safe version known as flag football, opined that maybe DeShawn hadn't burped his helmet. One of DeShawn's team members, a friend of my son's and a frequent guest at our home, considered that DeShawn hadn't kept his head down like Coach said. But the fact is, he was gone, and he wasn't coming back. Dead at 16. So I was interested indeed to read about the discovery made by Omalu, the pathologist that by coincidence was in charge of the autopsy of Iron Mike Webster, who played for the Pittsburgh Steelers. But I was equally interested in Omalu's own story, a man of great enthusiasm and character, a faithful Catholic who used "Geel" and "Gosh!"

Although Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) may not be a household term, most of us are familiar with the now very stringent, NFL regulations regarding the treatment of players thought to have experienced head injuries during play. Bennet Omalu is also not well known, although he is the pathologist who discovered CTE and took the NFL to task for ignoring the devastating effects of CTE on their players. *Concussion*, by Jeanne Marie Laskas, is the fascinating story of Bennet Omalu and his struggle to get the NFL own up to the existence of CTE, compensate players with the disease, and--finally--change the rules of football to reduce the chances for head injuries. Although this is definitely a book about Omalu's discovery of CTE and his fight to get the NFL to address this disease, it is mostly a biography Omalu. If you are more interested in the story of science vs. the NFL, you may wish to look elsewhere. The book is an expansion of Laskas' article, *Game Brain*, that she wrote for GQ in 2009. The book is engaging from start to finish, a David and Goliath story about a humble man from a small village in Africa who not only became a brilliant pathologist but also had the gumption to go one-on-one with the NFL and won. This is clearly the stuff that movies are made of, and it is no surprise that the movie based on this book, starring Will Smith as Omalu, is scheduled for release on December 25th, 2015. The fact is Omalu did start from very simple beginnings. His father was a prominent engineer and later became Oba, or chief of the Igbo village of Enugwu-Ukwu in southeastern Nigeria. Omalu's father was determined that his children would reach great heights, that they would expand well beyond a small African village.

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