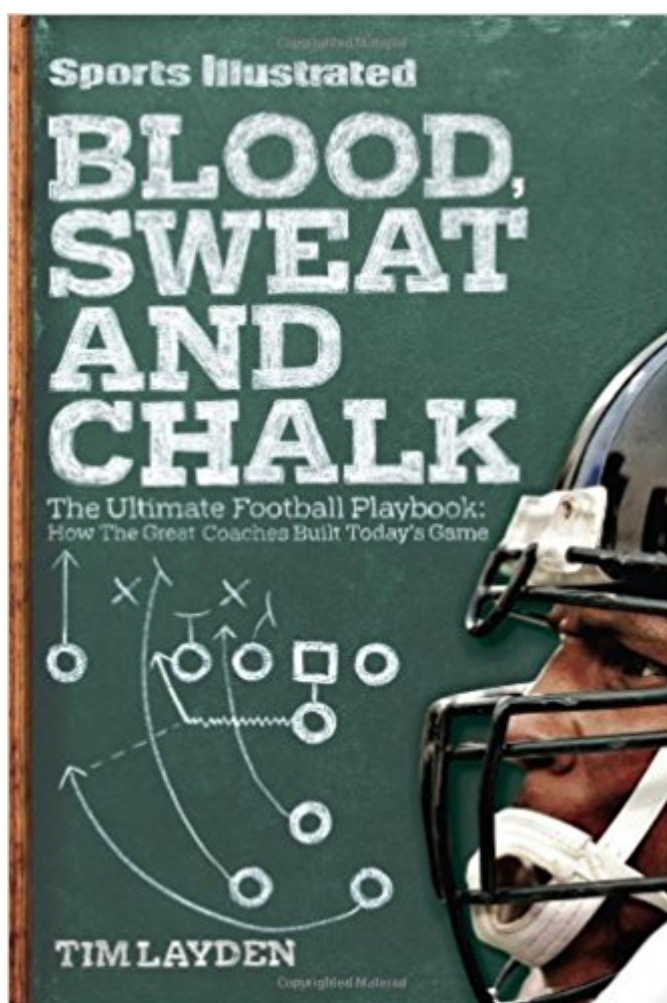


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Sports Illustrated Blood, Sweat & Chalk: Inside Football's Playbook: How The Great Coaches Built Today's Game



Synopsis

The plays used by high school, college, and pro football teams have come a long way from the days of the "T" formation. Today, the typical NFL playbook is complex enough to give a calculus textbook a run for its money-and long enough to be given to players on laptop computers. Plays like the end-around, the Hail Mary, and the counter-trey bear the insignia of some of the game's great innovators and the players that inspired them, while the newest schemes and plays used in the pros and college are quickly studied and copied throughout the country. These days, even middle-school teams in Pop Warner leagues are running complex plays, memorized by playing them out in John Madden Football. In *Blood, Sweat and Chalk*, Tim Layden will take readers back to the origins of the offenses and defenses that have changed the course of football and the men behind them. Readers will be delivered to the meeting rooms (and, in some cases, living rooms) where significant schemes were hatched, including the popular one-back spread offense that was first created by John Elway's high school coach to take advantage of his star quarterback's scrambling ability; the origins of the blitz; and the long reign of the triple option as a staple offense for high school and college. The book will also give readers a behind-the-scenes look at how a modern NFL team formulates its game plan for the upcoming season, and will provide a tutorial for fans to better understand the powerful head games that go hand-in-hand with the big hits.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sports Illustrated senior writer Tim Layden, who joined the magazine in March 1994, primarily writes about the NFL, Olympic sports (chiefly track and field in the summer and alpine skiing in the winter)

and horse racing, but has written about a wide variety of subjects for the publication and for SI.com. Before coming to Sports Illustrated, Layden spent six years at Newsday, three years at the Albany Times-Union and nine years at the Schenectady Gazette. During his three decades in journalism, Layden has won multiple sportswriting awards, including an Eclipse Award for coverage of thoroughbred horse racing in 1987. Among Layden's most significant work for the magazine are stories detailing the remarkable recovery of injured NFL player Kevin Everett (Dec. 2007), the phenomenon of Big Hits in the NFL (July 2007), the Triple Crown near-misses by Funny Cide (2003), Smarty Jones (2004) and Big Brown (2008), the tragic career of track star Marion Jones, the subculture of ticket scalping in the pre-Internet world (1997) and during the winter of 1995, the growing problem of gambling by college students. Born and raised in Whitehall, N.Y., Layden graduated in 1978 from Williams College, where he was an English major and a member of the basketball team. He is a runner-turned-cyclist who regularly battles the hills of northern Connecticut, where he lives with his wife and two children.

While sometimes inaccurate (The 3 WR set of the Bill Walsh West Coast offense comes to mind) the book really does a good job at teaching the history of Football strategies. There's nothing quite like it. From single wing to Lombardi sweep to the spread. The problem is with the format of the book, is that each chapter is one play. Just one play. That's often useful, in describing Student Body Right. Lombardi's power run game could use more than the power sweep, explaining the bedrock play of NFL rushing, the 'Power O'. Readers should know 'power' means the man blocking schemes for running with pulling guards. But the book is still informative and interesting, and will show you how cyclical things are. If you like books like this, read Smartfootball the books and the website. NFLbreakdowns and insidethepylon, web only authors like Mike Tanier are great resources too. Read the book, understand the history, then check out those resources for what's happening right NOW. Following Football's strategic evolution is the most rewarding and enjoyable way to be a football fan. It's a shame that the national sports discourse is so tawdry and cheap, so full of nonsensical beliefs, when fans really thought 'deflategate' last year would prevent the Patriots from being able to focus on the Seahawks and would lose the Superbowl... 'is this distraction distracting you?' 'how about now?' , 'now??'. "Distractions" as reported by ESPN, have nothing to do with what happens on the field. They are distractions for the fans, preventing them from learning, reading, discussing ANYTHING that Matters to the games being played. The plays in this book, mattered, immensely, in winning and losing games. The plays diagrammed, animated in motion on NFLbreakdowns and insidethepylon, MATTER. 99% of the things Sportstalk radio, ESPN and all

talking heads talk about, DO NOT.

I enjoyed this book. I am a football coach and the stories in this book tell where some concepts such as the Spread and Wildcat offenses originated. The book contains some typos but is interesting none the less. I have lent this book to others and they have enjoyed it also. I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys learning about the history of the game. It is a good read.

I've been looking for a good book on the history of football strategy. Unfortunately, this isn't it. Rather than organizing the material in a rough chronological order, which would have made sense, Layden just picks arbitrarily schemes to summarize. These topics are almost universally oriented to the offensive side of the ball, and they seem to be pretty arbitrarily picked. For instance, he never covers anything on the evolution of defensive formations, but there is a whole chapter on how the Cowboys liked to have receivers run post routes sometimes. Each focused play is diagramed, but there are details wrong in so many of the diagrams; players are often put in the wrong place, and often he only bothers to draw assignments in for a few of the players. I really wish this was a book about schemes, but unfortunately it's a book about coaches. Layden gives you every detail about the coaches he has decided to profile: their daily routine, their personality, their preferred restaurant to meet Layden, etc. What this book is missing is discussion of X's and O's football! I've been looking for a good book on the history of football strategy, and after wasting money on this, I'm still looking.

This is a great book about coaching football. It reads like a family historical novel with football as its backdrop. What I loved about it were the strategy comparisons and the technical details. I would easily give this five stars if it was just a little more about why and how these plays worked. Instead it feels more into the personal of the creators. I won't fault it for that. This book works on that level and many will love it for exactly the reason I wanted it to be different. Students of the game will learn more about the people in the game than about the strategies they invented (or reinvented.) What you are getting are great stories behind the plays. What I missed was the reasons how and why these strategies worked. Worth the read.

When I read *Coaching Confidential: Inside the Fraternity of NFL Coaches* I was disappointed in the lack of football strategy discussed in the book, so I decided to get this book. I was not disappointed. The book goes through the history of football and covers many important football

plays and schemes. The exposition was clear and the book has mini biographies of many coaches that are behind some of the innovations (making it clear that it's hard to really pinpoint an innovator since many times the schemes evolve through time). I thought the book was great. I learned a lot. It was fun seeing the philosophy behind plays I ran in high school when I played. It was also enlightening to see how some plays work and it helped me understand why the read-option was so effective this season with the 49ers, Seahawks and Redskins. It's even more surprising when one takes into account that the book came out three years before the read-option made its splash appearance on the NFL scene this year.

great history of football strategy. read it several times and given it as a gift to many players and coaches

While I can't say I've read every football book ever written, I doubt a better book combining strategy, historical perspective, and biography has ever been written. The author is to be highly commended (though I'm sure hard core fans and those with extensive playing experience on the higher levels may find a flaw or two). Please Mr. Layden if you aren't already on it, please release a similar reading in the near future discussing the Defensive side of the ball.

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