

# WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN?

Creating the Life Your Heart Desires



What's Your Gameplan  
Creating The Life Your Heart Desires

By James Bear

“

To My Bro – Richie,

There are truly no words to express my love and admiration for you.

You could always make me laugh and have always been there when I needed you.

I know that you will always be a success because it is inside of you, as a father, business builder and a man.

Thank you for sharing this life!

I love you

Jim Bro

To All Those Who Matter

Pops- my father. The man who introduced me to football, created my first blocking dummy out of his navy duffle bag and an old rolled up sofa cushion. Who shared stories of the great men of the game. Names like, Bronco, Johnny U, Joe Willie, Pop Warner, Halas, Paul

Brown, Baugh, Sonny, Butkus and hundreds more. He made me a student of the game and its' history.

Thank you for all the hours teaching, coaching, yelling and cheering throughout my career. For all those nights we spent working out after you had worked construction for twelve hour days. Watching you play semi pro for the Long Island Chiefs when I was a kid. I remember being in a locker room full of giants who played football because they loved the game. Watching Monday Night Football until all hours of the night on a school night and you would fall asleep from exhaustion. Some of the greatest memories of my life.

You taught me life lessons five yards at a time. I remember always wanting to run for long passes and you would say I needed to catch the ball at five and ten yards where it mattered. Teaching me how being great at the basics allows me to become great at the bigger things in life. How the principle of integrity, honesty and hard work will always payoff if I just stick with it. No matter how great football was, it should be used as a vehicle to earn my education. That even the greatest player has an end to his career and that no one can take away an education.

You were hard on me, but always with the best intentions. You believed in me even when I had doubts. You taught me I could do whatever I put my mind to and was willing to work for. Your lessons served me well, I love you Pops.

Momma-to my mother. The woman who gave me unconditional love and support, even when you thought my decisions might not be the best. You taught me compassion towards others and to give more than I took. That no matter what the outcome always thank God for every day on this earth.

Football was never your dream for your boys, yet you never tried to stop us from playing and eventually found a way to watch us play. The game day breakfasts from high school are still legendary and so are the stories of your late night cooking frenzies throughout my college career. Thank you for the white Puma cleats that cost you almost a week's wages my senior year, just so I could feel special on game nights. I still have those cleats wrapped in plastic in my box of athletic memories. I also thank you for my mad cooking skills, they have served me well in growing up big and strong.

Thank you for always being there to listen, with a kind ear and a sensitive heart, when life seems to be just a bit more than one man can take. You always told me to be a writer, so here it is. Thank you for being you, I love you momma.

“Beau”- Zachary James. You were my first born and the most beautiful creation I had even been given. You were beautiful inside and out and you never failed to make me smile or amaze me with your compassion towards others. Even through your struggles you made my world better. Though you left this earth too soon, not a day

goes by that I don't think of you and smile, I love you Beau.

Molly Rose-my beautiful daughter. You were a miracle and a fighter from birth. You came out fighting and have been a warrior princess ever since. You actually listened during all those hours of driving around the country to soccer tourneys and earned your own scholarship to college. Now you are a graduate and the mother of the most beautiful granddaughter a papa could want.

You are changing lives every day with your career and raising an amazing little girl. You are everything a father could ask for and I am so proud of you. I love my girls.

Coaches- to all of those men who took the time and effort to share their knowledge and love of the game of football, I thank you. My Dad was my first and constant coach, but there were many others who each gave me something to add to my game. Coach Bill McGinn from Long Island, New York, was my first head coach began the fun of the game for me. Merle Junior High School, also Long Island, Coach Sheehan pushed me to be a leader and take responsibility on every down. Coach Putnam, Coach Sanford, my first Oline coach and Coach Lukeatich, who kept me from quitting and overcoming frustrations. Moon Valley High School Phoenix Arizona, to give me the opportunity to showcase my talents for college. To Coach Brennan, O-line, Northern Arizona University. For giving a tall skinny kid a scholarship to

grow into the lineman I would become. Coach Rick Smith, O-line, NAU, you allowed me to learn how to breakdown plays and work with you on creating offensive line schemes. Coach Billy Cochran, NAU, just for being you. Coach Richard Gray, D-line, NAU, for bringing your spirit and madness to practice, during the roughest season of my career, I thank you. I think of you whenever I hear Billie Idol. Coach Andy Reid, O-line NAU, to the man that may have shaped my life the most. It took many years and a lot of reflection to learn all that you taught me. Life is about hard work and sacrifice, but team matters as well. Sometimes giving ground isn't giving in and working harder instead of seeking revenge will always bring about a better outcome. Thank you for the lessons our relationship taught me, I believe I am a better man for it.

Teammates- to every man I ever strapped on a helmet and stepped inside the lines with, I thank you. No one plays the game alone. The hours of practice, the days of running and hitting, the running until we didn't think we could run again only strengthened our bond for life.

To my first teammate, rival and nemesis, the one I love the most, my younger brother Richard. From our first backyard sessions with dad to the epic "basement battles" through our final year together in high school, you pushed me and rooted for me the most. You are the best "little" brother any man could have. It is an honor to watch you share your legacy with Tre' these days. To the Oceanside Stallions Football League, Long Island, NY, the

first organized football where I learned the basics of the game. Thank you. To those players of the Colts, Roughriders and Palominos, without all of you I could not have learned the value of teamwork and what it took to win. To my Oceanside Junior High team, Long Island, NY, you were the toughest and craziest kids I ever played with. We were undersized and undermanned, but we won on heart and determination. My Big Blue Wrecking Crew, Moon Valley H.S., Phoenix, Arizona, we won the first division title in school history. We began the winning tradition that was to follow for years to come. To all my Lumberjacks, triple days and yearly coaching changes and still we fought for one another. The spoon on the glass in preseason, running up Lowell Mountain, walking from the dome to the fields all season are things I will remember for life. To my brothers in arms, without you my dreams would not have been possible, I love you all.

## Preface

### I love football!

Three simple words, that shaped my life. Don't get me wrong, I love God, my children, my family and friends, but football is a whole other type of love.

Let me explain. I love the feel of a new leather football. Picking out and fitting my new equipment, the look and fit of a new helmet, the struggle of pulling a new game jersey over shoulder pads. The click-clack sound of my cleats on concrete, as I walk to the field. The smell of fresh cut grass and that feel of electricity in the air on game night. That noise of excitement in the crowd. Cheers of fans and the jeers of opponent's fans. That feeling of pride as the band blasted out our fight song.

Taking the field with my teammates, knowing how we had worked and sweat together for this moment to head into battle. The first play of the game when that first hit destroys all the nerves and lets my opponent know that I am going to spend the next three hours punishing him for stepping in front of me.

I love sitting in the locker room when the game is over. Win or lose, knowing I gave my all and looking at those teammates who feel the same. It builds a bond that only

## CONTENTS

### Do You Have a Game Plan

Preface

To All Those That Matter

Chapter 1	Do You Have a Dream
Chapter 2	Game Plan
Chapter 3	Learn and Apply
Chapter 4	Heart of a Champion
Chapter 5	Mindset
Chapter 6	Make New Friends
Chapter 7	You Are What You Eat
Chapter 8	Use Your Head
Chapter 9	Obstacles: Seen and Unseen
Chapter 10	Lose the "Tude" Dude
Chapter 11	Fourth Quarter

comes from spending hours and days working as a team for a common goal. I love the feeling of a hot shower after a game as the water washes away the blood sweat and exhaustion as I replay the game in my head. Knowing what I did well and where I need to improve for next game.

That's what I mean when I say I love football. If you are reading this and your heart rate begins to increase because you relate to my words, I know you love football too.

This book comes from that love and a need to share my knowledge with those who dream the same. My intentions are to share what it really takes to achieve your dreams.

There are no guarantees in life, but there are basic principles that will guide you towards success. Those principles are shared in the following pages. This book comes from personal experience. Some lessons were good, some painful lessons that I had to learn along the way. My hope is that you take what you need from my words and can avoid some of the pitfalls which only create more difficulty.

Remember, every experience is a chance to learn and grow. Never dwell on losses or failures, take your lumps, learn your lesson, get up and go forward. If you want something bad enough and are willing to pay the price through hard work and sacrifice you will achieve your dream.

## Chapter 1

### Do You Have A Dream

This is your life. What does it all mean? There are questions and struggles, good and bad experiences. From the day you were born, your parents had a dream for your life. They have raised you to become your own person.

Now that you have grown older, you have begun to imagine dreams of your own. There are things you want, but aren't quite sure how to get there.

This book was written for you.

A DREAM is how you picture your life in the future. What you truly desire and how you envision your life going.

The way to achieve your dreams are to set processes and goals that help you to make incremental steps towards your dreams.

The most effective way to make all of this come together is to create a game plan. Your game plan is a list or collection of your thoughts to direct your values, choices and actions to allow you to meet your goals.

You have heard the term game plan mentioned from many sports teams, coaches and announcers when asked for an idea of the outcome of a game. A coach may respond, "well our game plan is to utilize the run to open up or passing game against a tough defense." That game plan includes specific plays that will enable his team to be successful.

I assure you many hours go into creating a game plan, including options for any unexpected results that arise.

The same process should be a part of how you develop your game plan.

First, clearly define your dream. A dream should always be specific and precise, otherwise it's just a wish. Knowing what that dream is, you can begin to lay out a

plan of action and set incremental goals that progress you towards that dream.

Each of the following chapters will breakdown the concepts and importance of setting goals. as well as all of the thoughts you need to clarify as you begin your life in pursuit of those goals and ultimately your dream.

You may have several dreams throughout your lifetime. Your dreams are the most important things you can have in life. Dreams will keep you focused and carry you through the difficult times.

The only way of achieving your dreams is putting your heart and soul into believing you can.. Once you truly commit, you will begin to make decisions which coincide with your plans for success.

The purpose of this book is to share proven practices and life experiences that will assist you in your quest to achieve your hearts desire.

While there is not one perfect path to achieving a dream, there are common elements in people who have made their dreams come true. As previously stated the following chapters will examine various topics that will contribute to your success.

Sadly, too many people allow outside influences to tell them who they are or what they can be. Pretty soon a person begins to live with the limitations set by others or worse limits set by themselves.

If you learn nothing more from this chapter, learn this... Never limit yourself or let others set your limitations in life.

Let's get back to you.

Did you know that you carry on a constant conversation in your head every day. What you say to yourself on a daily basis determines your emotions and those emotions cause your behavior. You act the way you feel.

Use words that empower you. Tell yourself you are; good, strong, smart, honest, successful and happy. Say you can, will, achieve, and it's done. Avoid words like; stupid, dumb, loser, lazy, ugly or sad. Forget words like can't, won't, didn't, too hard or failed when describing you. Words are powerful, choose them wisely. There will be many obstacles along the way. Never become one of them.

So go ahead, set your dreams. Here's a little wisdom, want to live an amazing life... DREAM BIG.

## Chapter 2

### Game Plan

Now that you have determined the dream, how do you get there from here?

Having the dream isn't enough. There are proven techniques that will help you reach each goal. Greatness is not an accident. comes from a constant effort and desire to get where you want to be. Many times you will hear great players use certain words, for them it isn't a sound bite it is their way of life. Words like dedication, sacrifice, challenges, effort, setbacks, obstacles and breakthroughs. While I want to empower you I am also going to challenge you throughout this book.

Grab a pen and paper, write down each word you just read and a short definition of what it means to you. Then take the time to look up each word in a dictionary or in today's technology, Google it and see what these words mean. Trust me, these words will have a different meaning to you as you grow as an athlete and a person. Make the effort, no one else is going to do it for you.

Achieving a dream doesn't happen overnight. The best way to begin is to set smaller goals, you reinforce success patterns that will help you throughout your life.

Write your dreams and goals down and put them in a place where you can see them every day. It makes them tangible, something you can see and touch. Put up pictures, posters or other items that represent where you want to go. It helps you to see yourself there. Make time to visualize what you want and imagine yourself living that dream. If your dream is the NFL, imagine pulling on

that jersey and stepping onto the field on Sunday. Smell the grass, hear the crowd roar and think of all that you would do in that situation.

Take the time to read about the lives of some of the great players who came before you and what they did to succeed. Learn from their experiences. Every man who made it has a story. Learn from others.

Always keep in mind that your dream is all yours. There are going to be times in life when things don't go exactly as you wish. While these exercises seem silly, they do work. They are the positive reinforcement you may not find from others. Being great is rare and so there are a lot more people who will laugh than applaud in the beginning. Let it go.

When setting goals be realistic. If you dream of the big leagues then you need to set goals to get you there. Every successful goal brings you one step closer to your dream. Each step builds confidence.

Want to be bigger, learn about a program of workouts that will help you grow. Want to get faster, take speed training classes.

Today there are many opportunities to improve and clinics taught. On the back cover of this book we will offer a website that will share monthly information as well. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

For example, if you weigh 175 pounds and want to weigh 250 pounds, it probably won't happen in three

months. So be realistic. Give yourself a realistic time frame. Give yourself twelve months. That means you have to gain about four pounds of muscle a month. It will take hard work, but twelve months is more realistic and achievable. Find a weight lifting and nutrition program that has helped others. Remember, you are a student athlete, want to learn something? Study it.

The great thing about smaller goals is that you can always revise them and measure your results. These smaller goals also help you focus on the efforts that give you the best results. Spending hours doing curls isn't going to give you a lot of muscle to gain weight. Learn what exercises build muscle and work on them until you have them mastered. As with any task, if you want to improve consistently at anything perfect the basics. Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice creates perfect. There is a big difference. Repetition is the key to all learning.

Is your dream the NFL? Great, begin by learning the game in a youth league working on your skills. As you progress make the starting lineup for the junior high school team. Then make the high school varsity team and earn honors in your league, conference and state. Work towards a football scholarship to play for a college program. That will actually pay for you to get a college education. If you become a standout in college, an NFL team may allow you the opportunity to wear one of their jerseys.

It is a long and difficult road, but for the individuals who believe and put in the effort (time) and sacrifice (training), it is an obtainable goal. Only you can determine the answer. Remember T.E.S.T. to realize your dream.

\* T. E. S. T.: Time, Effort, Sacrifice, and Training

\*Time- it can be a long and difficult road.

\* Effort-you are the direct result of what you put in.

\*Sacrifice-something always has to give way to stay focused.

\* Training- this is what separates the great from the good.

Every year there are about 150 young dreamers whose names are called by the NFL commissioner during the draft. On that stage they are handed a team jersey with their name on the back. Close your eyes for a moment, can you see your name on a jersey?

No matter where they come from or how they grew up, they all have two basic things in common. They stand on the podium because 1) they had a dream and 2) they worked hard to achieve their goals to get there. Want to join them? Start working on your goals now.

## Chapter 3

### Learn And Apply

You have set your goals and taken the time to write them down. You begin every day by looking at them. The challenge now becomes how to design your life to achieve these goals. Goals give direction.

You will be told by others that all it takes is hard work. While hard work is never a bad thing, to get what you want takes more.

Too many people spend a lifetime working hard yet never seem to go anywhere, while others seem to turn everything they touch into gold. So what is the difference?

You will hear people say that “knowledge is power.” Unfortunately, that isn’t exactly true. Knowledge is something learned. There are millions of smart people in the world who hold no power. The power of knowledge comes when it is applied. Learning all that you can and then using it is what will make you successful.

What good is it to learn something if you never take action to utilize it. Many times a victory is determined by a team’s ability to use their knowledge of an opponent’s weakness. Use the precious time you have to gain knowledge of what works best for you and then apply it

to all that you do. Be honest with yourself. Know your strengths and acknowledge your weaknesses. When working toward your goals be sure to work even harder to improve your weak spots. Working on things you are good at will not help you as much as minimizing your weaknesses. You don't have to become perfect, just become the best you can be by working consistently on all aspects of yourself.

Perhaps it sounds too easy, learn it and apply, simple. Want to learn something amazing about the people around you? Try this little test. When you are alone with your mom or dad ask them what their dreams were when they were young. You might be surprised at what you learn. What I can assure you is no one ever says, my goals were to struggle through life and just try to survive. Every person you see had a dream at some point. Now we have already learned dreams change and life has its challenges, but too many people didn't plan or couldn't find away to overcome obstacles and eventually they became the pawns in someone else's plans and so their dream slowly withered and died.

Dreams need to be feed. Gaining knowledge and applying that knowledge gives you power, you feel it inside and it burns like a fire. The more you see your goals achieved, the higher you will set your next goals, the more that fire will burn. That's what people call passion. An uncontrollable feeling that makes you believe you can do anything you put your mind to. Champions all carry that fire and sometimes they burn so strong they ignite others.

John Elway of the Denver Broncos has been retired from football for many years yet the legend of "The Drive" in a playoff game still is shared every season. Joe Namath of the New York Jets defeated the Baltimore Colts 1969 in Superbowl 3 and still is legend today for elevating his team beyond expectations. Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, Steve Largent, Terry Bradshaw, all legends who elevated everyone around them with the fire to win. There are many others whose legacies live in the hallowed halls of Canton, Ohio in the NFL Hall of Fame.

Learn and apply, does that fire burn inside of you?

## Chapter 4

### Heart of a Champion

Having a plan, acquiring knowledge and working hard are important tools that will help you reach your dreams. However there is one piece of the puzzle that may be more important and more powerful than all other things combined. Your heart. Not how healthy it is physically, but how much desire and drive is within you.

The heart of a man can be tested, but not easily measured. The heart of a man only comes to light when his back is against the wall and no one believes he will succeed. You will have setbacks and challenges throughout your pursuit. How you respond at those times will determine your ability to ultimately reach your dream.

Your heart is controlled by your mind.

The human mind is incredibly powerful. Whatever you train it to believe it will create. Whether you believe you can do something or not, you will be correct. You hold the power to create your reality.

So begin every day building your mind to build your heart and body to believe in you.

Again, there are countless stories of talented athletes that eventually don't make it because they ultimately do not have the heart. There are also stories of undersized, overachieving men who find their way onto NFL rosters because their heart would not accept any other outcome. Talent will give you opportunities, but heart will carry you to your dreams.

Take the time to research some of your favorite players, each one has a story that shares the triumphs and the challenges that created the person and the athlete they would become. While you must find the motivation within yourself, by knowing others have done it can help convince you it can be done.

So when taking inventory on what you desire, take a good look on the inside. Do you have the heart to drive you when all of your other tools are exhausted? The one muscle that separates those who make it to those who spend a lifetime wondering.

I realize this isn't a long chapter, but it may be the most significant, so empower yourself, set your plan and put your heart into it because hard work isn't everything.

## Chapter 5

### Mindset

If you know where you desire to be, then understand that it will take time to learn and the most effective way to get there. You are not reinventing the wheel. Structure your life after those who you admire and already achieved what it is you desire.

In today's world of technology, you have all of the knowledge you need at your fingertips. You can research workouts for any level of skill. Learn techniques, the habits of other successful athletes and the most productive ways to see results. Know that in order to achieve your goals you need to find every advantage to excel. Always remember that you are not only competing against teammates and local competition, but against every other athlete with a dream on the planet. My father once told me, "for every sprint I ran or every exercise I did there was another athlete that I didn't even know existed doing more work. While he didn't matter today, there would come a time when he would be my competition at a higher level." That simple explanation drove me to work more than I ever imagined. I refused to let someone I didn't know, from somewhere I never

heard of take my dream from me. That was a great deal of motivation for me and it drove me through my entire career. Find something that will motivate you and put it in your heart because the time will come when you will need it to defeat those who would take your dream.

As was just explained the mind is a powerful machine. What you say to yourself and what you allow others to say to you will have a tremendous impact upon you. Have you ever known someone who is always mad or sad? Do you realize that person chooses to be that way. What you allow in is what you put out. Just like a car with bad gas won't run neither does a polluted mind. Do all you can to stay positive.

As you go through your career, you will play for many different coaches. Some had big aspirations and others coach for their love of the game. All coaches are human, as far as I know, and being human they have various personalities. Some coaches scream, some whisper others run around and some stand in the distance. No matter what type of coach you have they ultimately are trying to do their best. Some coaches I loved to play for and others not so much. I was very fortunate to have had more good coaches than bad and I am grateful. However I remember a moment in high school where I was not part of the drills and was asked to step in and play another position. No problem, well at first. See the guys practicing against me started cheating the plays and running to where they knew we were told to run. Me being a "star" and helping them out I changed the play and made them look bad by scoring a couple times with

other plays. I set the coach off who lost his mind for a moment and sent me to run laps. Fine I earned it, however as practice moved on I was never called back and being forgotten ran laps for over an hour. Men, I live in Phoenix Arizona, we play football in 110 degree weather some days. So when practice ended I was finally allowed to stop. I was so angry, I decided as I jogged in to remove my pads and helmet and hand them to the coaches. I took my punishment but was done playing football. I did not have to help out and so I felt my punishment was for making the defense look bad not because I committed a crime. Without me on offense at tight end we didn't score much. So I tossed in my pads and said good luck. It was so unexpected that nothing was said. After I showered a different coach came up and chatted with me sharing the difficulties that the other coach had with my decision. I didn't think of the team's loss just my revenge at that coach. Thankfully, this Coach Luke saw where my talents were heading and saved me from myself.

Had I had a better mindset about me vs. team none of that would have ever happened and I am eternally grateful for the lesson. I won top awards and set four school records and we won the school's first division title in the school's history.

It is truly never what happens to us in life that matters, but how we chose to respond to it.

## Chapter 6

### Make New Friends and Learn New Things

Another great asset you should find is a mentor. Someone who will help you, advise you and keep you accountable to yourself.

A mentor is someone who may have similar goals like a teammate or someone who has already accomplished similar dreams. The idea is you can relate to each other and share the process. You can celebrate achievements and talk about how to overcome obstacles.

Many players who have gone before you are more than willing to share their experiences and knowledge with fellow dreamers. You are a rare breed and those like you recognize their own kind. You are part of a special brotherhood, take advantage and find a mentor.

The best place to find a mentor is go to gyms or training facilities that are popping up all over the country. Many athletes have learned that training together pushes them harder and they share ideas and techniques for improvement. Don't approach them in a cocky or arrogant way, simply be honest and explain that you are looking to improve. Good athletes who are confident will want to share. If someone is rude, he is probably not your role model type anyway.

When I was 13-14 years old they didn't have training facilities around Long Island, NY so I would ride my bike to the high school field and watch the big boys play ball. It wasn't long before I would ask to join in. At first they laughed because of my age, but they would say yes. Well after being able to keep up, they found a new respect for me and started teaching me all sorts of things. I eventually was allowed in the weight room and believe me, where I grew up that was a big deal. I improved a great deal and couldn't wait to join them in a year. As life would have it, my father moved us to Arizona and the rest is history.

Those guys will never know the impact they had on me and that is why I have spent much of my life working with kids giving back what was freely given to me.

Now you have researched, planned and even found a mentor. Keep in mind there are many opinions and programs that have given thousands of athletes success. There is not one ultimate program regardless of the hype you may hear. You are an individual and what works for others may not always work for you. The best advice is to learn and test a variety of programs. By doing this you will see what works best for you. Keep a journal that measures your progress and tracks results.

Build a program that really challenges you and forces you to become uncomfortable. Through discomfort you will find breakthroughs. If you become settled in a program or it is too easy to accomplish, it will hurt you in the long run. The beauty of experience and knowledge

is that you can revise your training to overcome obstacles.

Every couple of years new programs come out, special exercises and practice techniques, stay on top of these changes, everything helps. Regardless of the workouts the truth remains, consistent dedication and hard work will always be required.

When you see results and enjoy the workouts, you will be more consistent and dedicated to continue. This is where success will come from.

## Chapter 7

### You Are What You Eat

By now you are thinking, well it is hard work and a great deal of commitment, but you are starting to see a purpose.

Up until now, it has all been about work and effort. This section may be the worst for you to swallow...literally.

Your mind determines what you think and believe. Your heart determines your drive. Your body will ultimately determine how far you can really go. It is the engine that keeps you in pursuit of your dream. What you put in your body may be more important than what you put in your mind.

You are what you eat.

When you are young your body is constantly changing. You are growing and building the foundation for your future. There are essential vitamins and nutritional needs that assist in helping your body to reach its potential. These food sources help avoid injury and disease as well as help recovery after a workout.

While we see the benefits of healthy nutrition every day on the news and teach it in school, people make choices contrary to the advice. These choices have created a society full of inactive and obese children and adults reaching epidemic proportions.

Times have truly changed with all of the nutritional information available. During my playing career we ate whatever was served and a great deal of it. There were no nutritionists showing us right from wrong. There were supplements but we never knew the difference between good and bad products. Today there are many options for learning the latest and most effective nutritional foods, supplements and vitamins available. Again it is about acquiring the knowledge to advance your progress.

Don't take your nutritional needs lightly. Create a nutritional program that you can live with. On occasion it's okay to indulge in a cheeseburger and a milkshake, but remember there are goals you're trying to achieve and a poor diet can destroy it all.

As with all of these choices, find what works for you. As you get older and begin to see results your needs will change and so should your nutritional plan.

Beyond basic foods there are great nutritional products and scientific breakthroughs for new products all the time. Take the time to learn, this knowledge will serve you well throughout your life.

Your healthy body will serve you long after your career is over. A healthy body can slow aging, avoid health issues and prevent disease. Many athletes tend to put on weight later in life resulting in depression, recurring old injuries and even shortened lifespan. All of these things can easily be avoided with early prevention.

As for alternative substances to improve your body, such as steroids, just DON'T DO IT... period.

There is a great deal of pressure for athletes to be superhuman. The use of steroids has become a common practice by athletes looking for an edge.

First off it is against the law and could put you in prison and even more importantly it is cheating. While you may think it serves a purpose in the short term, there are lifelong dangers. Rarely do young athletes hear about the hundreds of athletes who ruin their bodies and their lives from false information, poor advice and even in some cases knockoff versions of medical drugs. The results can cause uncontrollable anger, heart and liver damage and in some cases death. The effects can be relatively quick or show up years later.

One of my favorite football players of all times was Lyle Alzado of the Oakland Raiders. He was considered one of the fiercest defensive ends ever to play the game. He decided to make a comeback in the NFL and he came back in amazing condition and actually played for a year or two with great success. Several years later he decided to come forward and admit his use of steroids to achieve some of his success. He also explained that the steroids caused a rare brain cancer. He died at 43 years old.

Every choice has consequences. In the interviews and articles during his last months, Lyle knew the true cost of his fame. For me it was a tragic loss. I wore his number throughout my career.

The human body and brain are remarkable creations. They work in combination to assist growth, fight disease and heal the body. Outside introduction of manmade chemicals can inhibit the body's natural functions and cause permanent damage. Once again, what may work for one person could destroy another. Don't risk your dream on temporary gains. Work smart and utilize your nutrition to achieve the gains you seek.

You get one body, accept responsibility and don't risk your life, not even for your dream. Make the right choices for your life and remember you are what you eat. Take care of your body and it will take care of you.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Use Your Head**

You have now determined your path, educated yourself, trained hard and learned to eat like a champion. The groundwork is set. Just follow the plan, adjust as needed to keep up with your development and your dream is only years away.

Oh yeah, there is one minor piece of the puzzle that could make or break your dream, academic achievements. Biology lesson: The human head was designed for learning prior to the design of the football helmet.

The term is student athlete for a reason, the order of those two words are intentional. While there is great importance in athletic performance, it pales in comparison to an education in the broader picture of life. Many people may tell you different, but once again these people do not care about you the person.

You will not be allowed to participate at any level without having your academics in order. Even at the pee wee level grades are looked at for participation. At the high school level there are requirements that can stop athletes who don't take school seriously. College has

become nearly impossible unless you have the basic comprehension skills for admittance.

Now I know you're screaming... nonsense. Yes there are exceptions made when teachers and coaches "assist" gifted athletes who struggle in the classroom. The tragedy is that too many of these athletes don't make it in college because there is too much negative publicity and repercussions for schools that are caught cheating. Worse is when an athlete becomes injured and no longer can play. There is no one standing there to assist the "has been" player. Even if an athlete gets through college and fails to get an education and fails to make the NFL, he's left to struggle through life. There is little sympathy or help from all those former fans. The day of the "dumb jock" is gone.

Let's be honest, in today's world of sophisticated sports, especially football, a player is required to absorb a great deal of information usually in a split second. Offenses, defenses, audibles and minute by minute changes force you to think. You need to have some intelligence. Most players who do not perform in the classroom are lazy and refuse to apply themselves due to being told they are special. This is a terrible thing to teach. While it is great to have talent, it is not a right but a privilege to play. Again with technology and educational improvements there are few acceptable excuses for not excelling in the classroom.

Just like your athletic goals and dreams, create a game plan to succeed in school. Much of the success in

football comes from an intense passion and purpose to succeed. It should be the same with your educational goals. Find a career path that excites you and makes that same passion rise up inside you. Granted scoring the winning touchdown is an amazing rush, there are careers out there that can give you the same feeling of success if you truly care about what you spend the majority of your life doing.

Since many athletes live by their statistics, here are some sobering stats to consider. The average player in the NFL has a three to five year career. The average age of a player going into the league is 22 years old. That means that by the age of 25 to 27 years old their careers are over. The average male in America will live to 79 years old. You do the math, when the career is over, a player has 50 years or two thirds of his life to survive.

Without an education or any job related skills, finding a way to make a living can become a humbling experience. There is little need in the real world for a quick forty time or a 500 pound bench press.

While in the NFL many players become accustomed to a lavish, fast paced lifestyle. Unfortunately, rarely does their money last long enough to continue that lifestyle. These prideful, talented men realize too late that their lack of education will leave them broke and struggling.

If all that I said still doesn't convince you, take a moment and pull up a few news stories from just the past five years. Professional athletes who were

millionaires are bankrupt, pro ball players imprisoned for crimes such as murder, theft, fraud, the suicide rates are not exact because many players are intoxicated when in high speed car wrecks. The red flag is now concussions and lifetime brain damage or pain killer addiction. Now there are many theories and accusations about who, how and why, but the facts remain it all equals early death.

My theory which comes from personal knowledge of friends and stories people don't like to hear. In our society we revere an 18 year old young man who runs 4.3 in a forty yard dash or bench presses 45 reps at 225 pounds, and we cheer him Saturday afternoons at our alma maters, but nobody is cheering if and when he shows up for his classes three days a week. When the cameras no longer care in the NFL we leave basically monster sized boys uneducated and unprepared for the real world.

There is a huge let down from hero to has been that every athlete must face at some time. I believe that how it is faced is in direct correlation to the skills we have bestowed upon them to handle life.

Now I will say, it is ultimately up to each player to make the most of their own opportunity, but I also know all of the challenges involved at the college level when there are days it hurts too much to sit up after a Saturday afternoon game.

Pursue your dream but also realize that an athletic dream is great while generally short lived. The key to your journey is to take advantage of your skills and gifts to your advantage, never let the system take advantage of you. Regardless of your greatness, your athletic career will end in time. They can take away your dream but they can never take away your education.

As I just said in recent years there have been countless stories of great athletes some of whom have retired or have unexpectedly had their career end and they are found destitute, homeless, addicted to drugs, incarcerated and even committing suicide. Much of these results come from the loss of all the fame. They failed to plan for the days when the crowds no longer cheered for them. Even all the money they had made did not make up for the loss of the game and a sense of worth beyond the gridiron. Find your passion beyond the game.

Value all of the opportunities that your athletic performance allows, however, have your plan for when you are ready to say goodbye. Backup your athletic dream with a dream education that will take you even farther. Become a great athlete and make it what you do, never let it define who you are. Always use your head.

## Chapter 9

### Obstacles: Seen and Unseen

As you begin to find your way and strive to achieve your dream, you have to be aware of all that you are up against. There will be obvious obstacles that you can easily avoid, but there are more subtle issues that you won't recognize until it is too late. These obstacles can end your dream if you are not prepared when they arrive. Always be aware of where you are and the best decisions you can make.

Let's look at some of the obvious dangers that will halt your progress. Of course, trying to take shortcuts in your training or nutrition, lack of focus, not finding enjoyment or comfort in your quest and slacking in the classroom, can each do damage to your results. These are internal choices that you can control relatively easy.

The more difficult obstacles are the ones that come from outside influences and depending on how much value you place on the opinions of others will determine how you avoid them.

Unfortunately, a big part of society's right of passage for teenagers today is the experience of alcohol and drugs. The age seems to get younger and the experiences more extreme.

Beyond the legal problems for minors, there is the danger of abuse and a lifetime of struggle with addiction. The best way to avoid this danger is to stay away from these situations and environments.

Perhaps the toughest obstacle you will face comes from those you may trust the most, your friends. The

people you surround yourself with will have a direct affect on how far you can go. It sounds simpler than it is. Remember, you have a dream of becoming part of less than one percent of the population. People by nature are jealous, but especially competitive males. They may be friends, teammates, coaches and even family that can sabotage your efforts. Not always intentionally, but through simply being men. Always guard your dream with humility and compassion to those around you. People will support you if you are likable and willing to help others. True friends will help you to protect and achieve your dream. Those are the people you can thank with a few tickets to see you play for all their support.

There are those that will laugh, mock and put you down to distract you with words like do it later or there's always tomorrow, one time won't kill you or you're not one of us. Keep in mind you are not like everyone else and those who can't respect your dreams don't deserve to be called your friends. Sometimes it is jealousy, envy, their own ego or justification for their own lack of dedication to a dream of their own. Always remember, you are special, you believe you were born for greatness.

Now we come to a very intense and touchy subject, women. Now moms and girlfriends will hate me, but we are talking about YOUR dream. The distraction of a girlfriend in your life could be exactly the one thing that can destroy the easiest. They hold all your secret fears and weaknesses. They can raise you up or tear you to pieces and replace you before you blink. Your popularity will cause jealousy, your training time takes time from

your relationship time and then there is the danger of the introduction of sex. Nothing can end a dream faster than the responsibility of raising an unexpected child.

I can tell you from personal experience that a girl can become the easiest distraction because they are fun to be around. Unfortunately, I spent several years of high school and college in "serious" relationships that took a great deal of mental, emotional and physical time. In the three years of college when I was not in such situations I found that I had much more focus and success. As I have become older I always wonder what might have been different if I had not spent the time dealing with things that were not necessary for my achieving my dreams. You only get one shot. Oh yeah neither of those girls became my wife and they found new guys real quick to replace me.

I am not recommending becoming a monk, although it would simplify that part of your challenges. Meet girls, date girls, love the company of girls, just hold tighter to your dream than a girl. In your lifetime of stardom there will be many girls who will want you and thousands of opportunities to meet women. Always remember it is just one more obstacle to hinder your progress. Your career will be short. Your life with women or a woman will be for a lifetime.

Be aware of the world around you. Examine how your family, friends, schoolmates, neighbors and society in general live. Are they satisfied with where they are or who they are? People talk about their past, their lost

dreams and how life got in the way. Life is always in the way, it is how you react to it that determines where you go. People adjust to where they are and then begin to accept their fate rather than do something about it. Accepting mediocre has become the norm. I'm not condemning average I am just saying there is more.

The final obstacle is you. Never allow fear or doubt to overcome your desire. Fear can drive you harder or it can paralyze action. Don't become complacent when things get easier, there will come a time when your efforts will pay off and things will get to be habits. Always believe you will get there by doing whatever it takes. Since you don't want to be like everyone else, you must do things differently than everyone else. Everything you do, every choice you make, every person you associate with and every action you take will set in motion the life you live. Let no one or nothing become your dream killer.

## Chapter 10

### Lose the Tude Dude

There are two words that I have learned as an adult that I wish I had truly understood the value of as a young athlete. Attitude and Perception. Let's take them one at a time.

Attitude is a word that you might hear a lot. A positive attitude is admired while a negative attitude has caused many a talented athlete to lose all that they have worked for. Attitude is nothing more than how you approach and react to the things in life that happen. If you set your mind to always look for the lesson in the things you are faced to deal with you will find it empowering when things become difficult. Every journey has setbacks. It is not what happens to you that matters, it is what you do about it that sets your path.

Train yourself to always learn something from each difficult situation you face. By having your sights set on your goal you will find that the things which would stop others in their tracks, you take in stride.

There are some NFL players who were actually cut from a football team at some point in their lives. Take the time to read about Doug Flutie, Shannon Sharpe or Kurt Warner. Three outstanding players with great stories of how their struggles created the men they would become.

Like many people, I once disliked a player who showed arrogance and obnoxious behavior on the field. He was constantly shown celebrating and rubbing his success in the faces of other players. I never understood his behavior. One day my daughter brought over a book he had written during his career. In the opening paragraph he had written a comment which really struck a chord with me. I don't remember the exact wording but it was generally, "if you don't know where I've come from, then you have no right to judge me. You don't know what I

have been through or what it has taken for me to get here. My celebration comes from my excitement at where I am at in my life. No one expected much from me and here I am living my dream.” From then on I looked at Chad Ochocinco Johnson in a totally different light. I had spent much of my life feeling the same way.

I have never met the man and I don't know what type of human being he might be, but from that book my PERCEPTION of him as a player changed.

Just as important as attitude is the perception others have of you. While you may not need others approval or support, it is important what people think of you while you strive for your dream. Every person has a perception of themselves, of others and of the world. That perception creates their reality. What a person believes is their reality. That reality may be totally different from your reality but it could have a lasting impact on your pursuit of your dream.

Throughout my career I played with an extreme intensity and a fierce desire to win. I understood losing but I sure didn't like it. There were many people along the way who just didn't get it. I was not extremely gifted nor blessed with exceptional talent. I worked hard for what I earned and wasn't going to let someone else ruin my efforts. This isn't always the best way to make friends but it was who I was.

I was perceived by some as angry, unhappy, not a team player because I didn't do a lot of cheerleading. I

let my play do my talking. I was so focused on my own performance and how I could affect the outcome of the game that I never considered what others were thinking about. Guys who had energy to cheerlead on a sideline weren't using that energy to actually play in a game. It never occurred to me that those around me didn't feel the way I did. Looking back, I realize there were a lot of guys who play for a lot of different reasons. Back then I thought that was their problem, it wasn't a problem, it was their dream. It was different from mine. People tend to mock or fear the things they don't understand.

Take responsibility for your own actions. Lead by example. Don't fake it for anyone. Try to be the best person you can be. People will follow people they believe in, make them believe in you. Football is a team sport and you need them as much as they need you. I didn't always see that and I wasn't always humble and gracious like I should have been.

Here is a life lesson.

I once played for a young coach who didn't get me at all and I sure as heck didn't get him. We clashed from the moment we met. As I watched my young teammates excitedly greet this new guy, I was not impressed. He was my third offensive line coach in four seasons. Each new coach would come in and make his promises and within a few weeks after that season he would move on leaving me behind. I saw what went on with the older guys each time it happened. I figured this guy was no different.

I just wanted to be left alone to do my thing and get my opportunity to try out in the NFL. I was already contacted and tested as a possible free agent with a team. I wanted to have a great senior year and maybe follow my dream to a camp.

What I didn't ever consider was that every coach also had a dream. This coach had a plan but he also wanted my respect. As a coach he did deserve that but because of my past experience I wasn't interested in what he wanted. That was my fault, not his. He had a job to do and I didn't get that. He had a young family and responsibilities I never considered. I only cared about what I needed. Instead of working with him I worked for myself. Looking back I was a young angry kid who didn't see the big picture.

I would like to say I wonder what ever happened to the best coach I never played for because of my immaturity and lack of understanding. I have never wondered what he did with his life. I have had the pleasure of watching that coach live his dream every fall for the past seventeen years as he has shown his knowledge. As an assistant coach, then twelve years as the head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles and currently as the new head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. That's right, I had the opportunity to learn from Andy Reid.

I may never have gotten the chance to play in the NFL and it may not have made a difference but I do know that not being a better man at the time didn't help to achieve my dream. The lesson is that you will have

moments that define your life you need to recognize those moments. You only get one chance to live your life, do all that you can to make it the best it can be.

For the record, I am a true New York Jets fan, so I was never an Eagles fan. I am also an old school Oakland Raiders fan, the Alzado thing, so I never loved the Chiefs either but I do like seeing someone I was coached by standing on the sidelines. I will admit some of my favorite players wore the jerseys of both of those teams.

You just never know...

## Chapter 11

### Fourth Quarter

By now you have done some soul searching and taken an inventory of your life. Nobody will ever tell you it is easy to achieve a dream, because it is not. If it was easy everyone would live them and the world would be a very different place.

Dreams are not impossible, but they do take a great deal of work and focus. When everyone else is out having fun, a person with a dream is hard at work doing all that is required to get there. Did you know that the only place you find success come before work is in the dictionary.

Want proof that dreams come true? Turn a television on a Sunday in the fall and watch young men living out their dreams in NFL jerseys.

Dreams are special, just like you.

I know you're special because you have taken the time to read this book. Something inside you has always made you feel different. Like you were made to do great things and you were.

You see I already know you. I once was like you. Actually, I am still like you, only my dream has changed. This book is one of my dreams. I spent the first twenty two years of my life working towards my dream. I excelled in football at every level. I had letters of interest and was part of the NFL data base. In the end, my dream came up a little short.

All those years I heard it would never happen and I was never going to make it. I refused to listen and other than a few changes outside my control I had gone as far as I could. I hold a college degree that I paid for with my efforts and a lifetime of memories and experiences that I wouldn't change.

When I was your age, I believed I did everything in my power to achieve my dream. Now that I am older, I have had time to look back and examine my life. I looked at the good and bad choices throughout my career. While I did have a successful career, I know that if I did a few things differently during my journey, I just might have made it to the top.

I can never go back and while I have no regrets, I do have knowledge as a grown man that I shared here with you. I believe that we are put on this earth to have a positive impact on the lives of others and if my experiences can assist other athletes to avoid the pitfalls and setbacks in achieving their dream, then my endeavor has been a success. I had a loving and supportive family and a father who made me believe in myself no matter what others thought. I know that for many young athletes today there may not be that guidance.

The intent of this book is to serve as a guide to young men who hold the dream of becoming professional athletes. To find the internal drive and devotion to their dream and not allow anyone or anything persuade them to give up.

The true meaning of life is found in the journey and the experiences we encounter to get through our lives. The final result is great, but once there we find new things to pursue. So find your value in every goal you achieve and every step that gets you closer to your dream. The value system and good habits you create will serve you well not only in pursuit of your dream, but throughout your life. Enjoy the journey because it is the best part. All the hard work, commitment and sacrifice are traits to be proud of, not everyone is willing to put forth the effort required. Be proud but always show gratitude and humility because it will draw people to you who will want to help you succeed.

My prayers for you are that you envision your dream and spend your time pursuing that dream. Always be true to yourself and those you love. Find joy even in the toughest experiences of your journey. Those moments will define the man you are to become. Allow no one to sway your passion to achieve greatness.

## Chapter 12

### You Gotta Have It

In a world filled with distorted values, mixed messages and society's insatiable desire for drama, you are bombarded with all the evil the world has to offer.

In your quest for personal growth and greatness, you must avoid all of the negative and hateful things going on around you. Life is tough. Bad things happen and yet you must still move forward to achieve your goals.

Simply put, you've gotta have faith. Having faith in yourself, your abilities, the faith that your hard work and determination will pay off, the faith that you deserve to achieve your goals because of your efforts. For me there was one more part. The realization that there would be things outside my control and I would need to hold strong to something greater than myself. I found that place of strength in God.

I know what you're thinking, "here we go, God is great, Just pray, What would Jesus do?" You are dead wrong. My faith in God wasn't a catchy slogan or a neon WWJD wristband. It wasn't standing in church singing louder than everybody else. It was so much more personal and deeper than that. It was a realization that I would achieve my dreams no matter what others thought because there was someone more powerful than me who had my back. See I looked around and saw somehow I had gifts that others didn't and no matter how tough things were I always came out of it all right.

My mother and father raised us catholic with much different styles. My mother would drag us four kids to church and dad stayed home to watch the Giants play football. He believed in God but would say he didn't need to stand around in a church. Talk about mixed messages.

As I grew older I realized both my folks were right in a way. It was important to attend church to be around others who had faith in the community. However, since God created all things, then He is everywhere. Too many people act one way in church and another at home. Having faith means you act the same regardless of the place or situation.

See faith is proven when all else seems to fail and it doesn't seem possible to move forward. When I would get to the point where I believed I had to stop and accept defeat. There was always this inner voice that I'd hear,

“don’t quit just yet, this is temporary. You are greater than the struggle before you.”

Looking back, these moments created the man I was meant to become. The times when I wouldn’t give up and suddenly an opportunity would arise. All of that pain and frustration would turn into triumph. I would realize that sometimes God whispers and sometimes He roars for us to hear what he has to say. You just have to take the time to listen. See it’s not like He actually speaks to me, He simply creates opportunities to fulfill my destiny if I am open to learning.

Still skeptical ? Here is a quick version of my life. I was born average size into a life of financial struggle. My parents barely have high school educations. Mom stayed home. Dad worked construction. There were six in our family. No private clubs, no training professionals, no high tech training facilities. My dad rolled a couch cushion into his navy duffle bag for a tackling dummy and took me and my younger brother into the backyard to learn the game.

My mother’s family told my dad he would cripple us and only people with money went to college. My dad was wasting his time and dreams. We started pee wee football in Long Island, New York in a four team league at the age of 8. We played hockey in the winters. In junior high school I started at fullback and defensive end. I played basketball and lacrosse as well. Freshman year I was the starting quarterback and defensive end. My younger brother told the coach I was better than our

star player and I was handed the football during a bad practice. Five plays later I was the new QB, Rich was right.

In New York high school started at tenth grade. I was poised to become the starting QB on a team that just won the State Championship. My last day of ninth grade, I walked into our driveway to find my dad packing our home into a moving van. We were heading out west to Phoenix Arizona. I played three years at defensive end and tight end. My senior year I earned All League, All Conference and All State. I was 6’2” tall and 195 lbs. Arizona State talked to me but decided I was too small. I wrote to a bunch of schools but there wasn’t a lot of interest. Back then films were taken on eight millimeter films and my films never got sent. I was fortunate enough to sign a full ride to Northern Arizona University, a Division I-AA in 1982. Until they showed up I didn’t even know who they were. I wanted to earn a college degree and they were offering me exactly that.

I redshirted as a freshman and then got to play for four years as an offensive guard and tackle. I was actually approached as a free agent prospect my junior year by several NFL teams. The Dallas Cowboys were interested in me as a free agent. As a junior I was now 6’5” and 275 lbs. I was voted a two time Academic All American and graduated with a Bachelors degree in Political Science and a minor in English Literature.

My senior year we had another coaching change and my career didn’t go the way I planned. That was one of

the uncontrollable things I mentioned earlier. While the NFL didn't work out, I did receive my degree and was eventually accepted to law school in California.

I even met my future wife who would eventually bless me with the two greatest gifts of my life, my son Zachary James and daughter Molly Rose.

So you see, no pedigree, no financial backing, no private coaching and plenty of obstacles in my life and still I achieved my dreams with hard work, determination, sacrifice and a whole lot of faith. If you cannot see the hand of God directing my life then I don't know what else I can say.

I know now that God is found when we seek him. It is not magic or luck, it is realizing that each of us needs to find love, guidance and understanding to help us achieve becoming all that we were meant to be. I believe you have that feeling inside of you that you are meant for greatness.

I told you from the first words, this is YOUR life. Use this book as a guide to help you achieve your goals. There is a book which will tell you how to live your life, it is called the Bible. God loves you and so do I. My hope for you is to become the person you were intended to be and you live your life to the fullest.

I believe in you. Believe in YOURSELF.

Dream Big and Go for it... GOD Bless.

