



# Never Die Easy: The Autobiography of Walter Payton

*Walter Payton, Don Yaeger*

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"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.

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