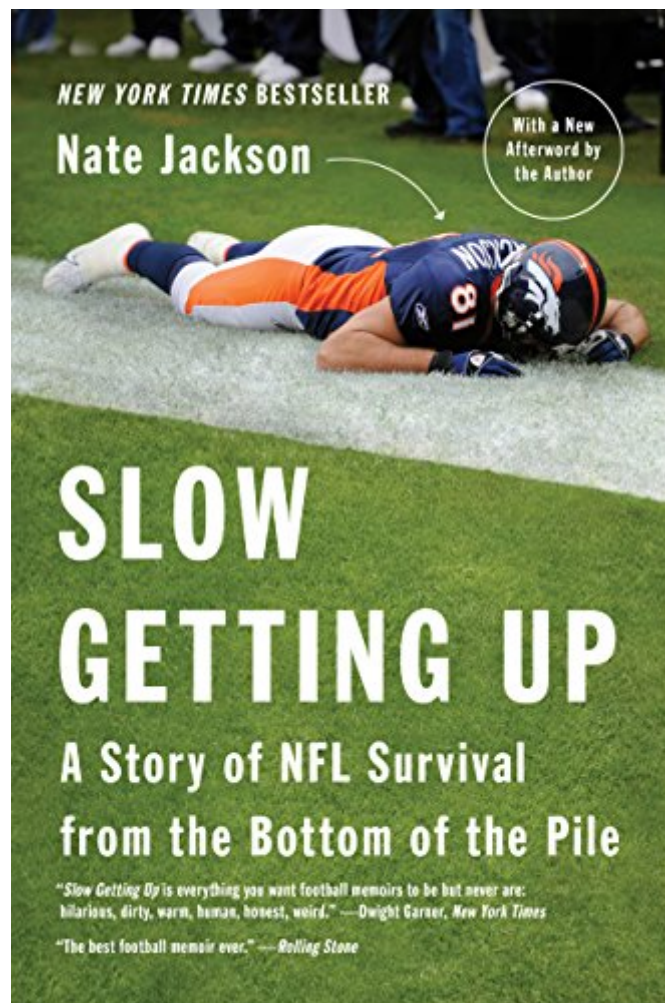




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# Slow Getting Up: A Story Of NFL Survival From The Bottom Of The Pile



## Synopsis

One man's odyssey into the brutal hive of the National Football LeagueAs an unsigned free agent who rose through the practice squad to the starting lineup of the Denver Broncos, Nate Jackson took the path of thousands of unknowns before him to carve out a professional football career twice as long as the average player. Through his story recounted here—from scouting combines to preseason cuts to byzantine film studies to glorious touchdown catches—even knowledgeable football fans will glean a new, starkly humanized understanding of the NFL's workweek. Fast-paced, lyrical, dirty, and hilariously unvarnished, *Slow Getting Up* is an unforgettable look at the real lives of America's best athletes putting their bodies and minds through hell.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 2000, the book "Kitchen Confidential" revealed one chef's thoughts on what it was like to be a chef. Not a celebrity chef featured on the Food Channel, but a working-class, sore-knees, burnt-fingers guy who lived life one plate at a time. It was a revealing, funny, profane look at the

restaurant industry. Nate Jackson spent six years in the NFL. He was not a star, but he was part of the team. He was a working-class, sore-knees, broken fingers guy who lived life one season at a time. With this book, Jackson has written a revealing, funny, profane look at the day-to-day life of an NFL player. Talk about the NFL tends to focus on the stars - Tom Brady, Peyton Manning, Adrian Peterson, etc. This book is a welcome reminder that there are 53 guys on each NFL team, and although not all of them are known by name, they endure training camp, take the routine abuse of regular season games and just do their jobs for their love of the game and our entertainment. Jackson chronicles the life of an NFL regular with no self-pity, amazing honesty and a wry sense of humor. If you love the NFL, you'll probably like this book.

There is a good amount of well-written football books. There are also many football books penned by current and former players. Unfortunately, there has generally been little overlap between the two. NFL memoirs are often cash-outs after particularly improbable seasons or impending bankruptcy or financially-ruinous divorces. The player's voice is generally diluted by a co-author who invariably has a penchant for lame clichés and generic athlete platitudes. Thankfully, *Slow Getting Up*, Nate Jackson's reflections on his eight years on the fringes of the NFL, features quality prose and brings a fresh and insightful perspective to a rather stale format. It is one of the most entertaining football books released in the past few years and is a worthwhile read for football fans interested in learning more about the trials and tribulations facing professional football players. After beginning with a 2008 hamstring injury that ultimately spelled the end of Jackson's career (physical maladies and the arduous rehabilitation associated with them will be a common theme throughout the piece) *Slow Getting Up* chronicles Jackson's improbable journey from Division III star at Menlo College to making an NFL roster and sticking around and contributing in the league for several years. Each chapter generally covers a season and the book moves at a fast clip and reads like a series of fleshed-out blog posts. He devotes early passages to outlining the draft process and his attempts to stick with the San Francisco 49ers as an undrafted free agent. Jackson is eventually traded to the Broncos during training camp in 2003 and he initially manages to stick on the practice squad before spending a few years as a backup tight end and special teamer with Denver. The author's relatively long tenure allows him to mine a considerable amount of anecdotal gems from his playing career, such as playing for the Rhein Fire in NFL Europe, losing to the Steelers in the 2005 AFC Championship Game, enduring a surreal training camp with Eric Mangini's Cleveland Browns in 2009, and trying to catch on with the cash-strapped Las Vegas Locomotives of the UFL. *Slow Getting Up* is one of the few player memoirs to really focus on an athlete treading the tenuous line

between the practice squad and special teams and a career outside of the NFL. Understandably, most publishers are not really enamored with putting out books by authors with only 2 more NFL touchdowns than their general audience. Because Jackson is not able to describe what it feels like to catch a game winning touchdown in the Super Bowl or catch 100 passes in a season, much of *Slow Getting Up* touches upon activities outside the games. Jackson details life on an average NFL road trip, playing on the scout team, the incredibly frustrating process of rehabilitating from injuries, and extravagant nights of clubbing. That being said, Jackson does go into some depth about the game when he discusses his larger roles on special teams, where he played on kickoff, kick off return, and punt units for the Broncos. Some of his gridiron observations are also insightful, such as how coaches like Gary Kubiak, who spent his entire career as John Elway's backup, is more concerned with concepts than those with more NFL game experience. I feel that football players are generally held to lower standards as writers (which makes sense given many of them are pretty poor in the literary department) but Jackson's prose is legitimately enjoyable to read compared to any writer. His writing is peppered with pop culture references and witty turns of phrase. Sometimes his humor can come off as sophomoric and overly scatological, but *Slow Getting Up* is mostly a pleasure to read. His tone is sarcastic, self-deprecating, and irreverent and it is refreshing to hear a former player be so candid. Jackson even admits to a brief fling with HGH while attempting to recover from an injury. It is hard to think of a better guide (among former NFL players) through Mangini's surreal militaristic training camp, where players watch film cutups of warmups in meetings and are constantly quizzed on team mantras, than the snarky and incredulous Jackson. Jackson also is able to vividly describe much of his NFL life. This is probably due to the fact that he has essentially been writing this work for several years. Jackson started a journal for the Broncos' website when he played for the Rhein Fire in 2004 and maintained his column for three years. Additionally, Jackson was able to consult with Wall Street Journal writer Stefan Fatsis while the latter attended Broncos' training camp to write *A Few Seconds of Panic* (a 2000s version of *Paper Lion* that is worth seeking out for football fans or anyone curious as to the depths of Todd Sauerbrun's craziness). There is a surprising amount of dialogue in *Slow Getting Up* and while I am guessing most/all of it is based on Jackson's recollections it still demonstrates the robustness of his memories. Jackson also is not bitter about much and does not really have a bone to pick with anyone and he is generally objective and fair-minded. There are no chapters lamenting the physical beatings he endured, rants against the teams that released him, or chastising agents or fans that wronged him. Some may find his portrayals of Adam Scheffer (who used to beat a beat writer for the Broncos) and Eric Mangini a bit unfair but who is honestly going to defend those guys? Jackson's

riffs on their insufferable personalities were some of the highlights of the book for me. In Sum Most NFL memoirs devote at least some pages to describing players' general weekly routines during training camp and the regular season. What separates *Slow Getting Up* from the pack is Jackson's perspective and insight into such matters. I understand the comparisons to *Ball Four*, but *Slow Getting Up* really struck me as the football cousin of Mark Titus' *Don't Put Me in Coach*. Both books seem geared towards the Grantland-reading demographic who will catch the Radiohead references and appreciate the anecdotes about players and coaches from years past. I don't think it will be added to the literary pantheon of the best football books ever (not that Jackson ever intended that) but *Slow Getting Up* is a fast-paced, entertaining and enlightening look at life in the NFL that I thoroughly enjoyed.

If you are like me, then you read a few of the 5 star reviews and then read the 1 or 2 star reviews to see what the comparisons are. In this case, after having read the 1-2 star reviews I have to say - those people are idiots. They complain that it isn't juicy enough on the party details. Or maybe there is some swearing (OMG!). Or maybe it doesn't deal enough with the inner workings of the NFL... So here is the deal... It's about one guy. Nate Jackson, and what he went through. And it's honest. Nate doesn't try to pretend to know what it is like for other guys he just lays out what it was like for him. And yeah, he wasn't Shannon Sharpe - and that's the whole point. This is the story of a guy who actually played but was never celebrated. And it is an absolutely fascinating, honest, and engaging read of a man who dedicated his whole world to football. For me, I came away with a better understanding of how difficult and competitive the NFL is. What it's like to break into the starting line and the rewards that come with. And more so, what a man will do to keep at that level. Kudos Nate.

It has been hard for me to really full-heartedly fall in love with the NFL, as I could't stop believing that sometimes, games were basically "set," that it was too predictable who would win or lose, and that it was all there for entertainment. Granted, this is somewhat true: the NFL is an entertainment business. Any professional sports program is. But for the players that play, it is much more than just going out to perform; they are there to keep their job and win a football game. Their tape is their resume, coaches, as well: their tape, their record, is their resume. If they can't win, they get fired. It's a brutal truth and it's very low job security, you are always fighting for your job. Nate Jackson lets out almost all of the secrets of his personal involvement with the NFL: we read about his injuries, his determination to move through them, the beating he was willing to take to play the game he loved, etc. You also see how precious each and every game is to these players-their passion is to win and

to make big plays. The language is authentic (he doesn't hold back, but he isn't obnoxious, either), and is fairly comical at points. You can tell that Nate was grateful for his career in the NFL, but isn't afraid to shed ample light on the frustrations and injustices that inevitably exist.

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