

Sayers: My Life and Times

Gale Sayers, Fred Mitchell

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Four decades ago, Gale Sayers allowed his remarkable running ability on the football field to speak for him. Today, Sayers has a powerful and poignant message to pass along not only to athletes but to everyone, and it's a message straight from his heart. Sayers, who grew up in modest surroundings in Omaha, Neb., is the son of a car polisher and mechanic. After fielding 75 college scholarship offers, he selected Kansas, where he became an All-American halfback before being selected in the first round of the 1965 draft by the Bears. Later, he became the youngest man ever inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, at age 34. A knee injury in 1968 cut short his spectacular career, which included an NFL record 6-touchdown effort against the San Francisco 49ers. The story of Sayers' friendship with former Bears teammate Brian Piccolo was immortalized in the 1971 made-for-TV movie "Brian's Song," which starred James Caan as Piccolo and Billy Dee Williams as Sayers. The loss of Brian helped Sayers put his life in proper perspective. He later realized his serious knee injury was just a minor blip on the screen when it comes to life and death matters. Since leaving pro football, his enduring message to young athletes is to respect the game, give back to the community and prepare for the future. Those are words he has lived by his entire life, and they make *Sayers: My Life and Times* one of the most compelling sports memoirs to come along in recent years.



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