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# Is There Life After Football?: Surviving The NFL



## Synopsis

Â 2016 Best Book Award, North American Society for the Sociology of Sport  
Is There Life After Football? draws upon the experiences of hundreds of former players as they describe their lives playing the sport and after their football days are over. The "bubble"-like conditions of privilege that NFL players experience while playing, often leave players unprepared for the real world once they retire and must manage their own lives. The book also reveals the difficulties affecting former NFL players in retirement: social isolation, financial concerns, inadequate career planning, psychological challenges, and physical injuries. From players who make reckless and unsustainable financial investments during their very few high-earning years, to players who struggle to form personal and professional relationships outside of football, the stories in the book put a very human face on the realities of professional football. George Koonce Jr., a former NFL player himself, weaves in his own story throughout, explaining the challenges he encountered and decisions that helped him succeed after leaving the sport. Ultimately, *Is There Life After Football?* concludes that, despite the challenges players face, it is possible for players to find success after leaving the NFL if they have the right support, education, and awareness of what might await them. Â Â  
Â Instructor's Guide

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In their new book, James Holstein, Richard Jones, and George E. Koonce, Jr., discuss the discovery of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy as well as other physical problems that afflict former NFL players.Â Yet the most stunning finding of their research is not how life in football

affects players' health, but rather how it affects their ability to find and hold a job, to maintain relationships, even to engage in basic social interactions...[A] candid look inside the 'bubble of NFL life and then the difficulties experienced by former players--men in only their late 20s and early 30s--when they leave that isolated, abnormal world."-Newbooksinsports.com

• I'm not quite ready to leave the game I love yet, but this is exactly the kind of information I need as that time approaches. • Charles Woodson, Oakland Raiders, Heisman Trophy Winner, and Super Bowl Champion "The poignant fate of the former athlete, revered then forgotten, is a theme in Western literature that goes back to the ancient Greeks. The NFL today has created its own up-to-date version of that mythic figure • the millionaire football hero and celebrity at 25, a lost and bankrupt cripple ten years later • but also a more complicated reality, and that story has never been told more fully than in this deeply researched and insightful book."-Michael Oriard, author of *Brand NFL: Making and Selling America's Favorite Sport* • The authors provide a unique perspective that is only possible through the combination of scholarly knowledge and the real-life experiences of George E. Koonce, Jr. and other athletes whose testimonials were used to illustrate their points. •

• PSYC CRITQUES "We are used to thinking of NFL players as larger-than-life figures who do great deeds, earn huge salaries, and • we •™re coming to realize • run terrible risks. But *Is There Life After Football?* reveals these men as life-sized, as people who face tough choices throughout their lives. The various ways they cope make fascinating reading."-Joel Best, author, *Kids Gone Wild: From Rainbow Parties to Sexting, Understanding the Hype over Teen Sex* "This is a book fans should read before the next game • or before they let their own son suit up. If you •™ve ever wondered 'What ever happened to •?' • then *Is There Life after Football?* is a book you shouldn •™t pass."-Real Times Media "It is timely considering the financial settlement the NFL reached in August 2013 with retired players for head injuries sustained at work, and the ongoing discussion over the physical dangers that football at all levels presents • Both sports enthusiasts and concerned readers can profit from the insights and lessons offered in this informative and prescriptive work. •

• Choice •els *There Life After Football?* brings us inside the lives of NFL players to show why so many wind up in dire straits after their time on the field, from depression to debilitating lifelong injuries to catastrophic financial mismanagement. [ • ] The book seeks, among other things, to dispel the myth that everyone who plays in the NFL is financially set for life. •

• New York Post "Perhaps the cruelest irony of an athlete's life is that he must 'retire' just as most guys' careers are taking off. How they make sense of their life course, and sustain their masculine identity is the subject of this engaged and entertaining study. What emerges is a different question from the book's title: given the demands of time and commitment, the violence and injuries, and the sacrifice

of anything resembling a normal family life that defines professional athletics, the real question is 'is there life during football?'" -Michael Kimmel, author of *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* "The book is well written, with clarity and insights not available in similar popular accounts. It would be useful and of interest to students in sport studies classes, providing much material for discussion." -*Journal of Sport History* "Finally someone tells it like it is! This book does an incredible job detailing the real life of an NFL player. This is a must read for every athlete, no matter the sport." -Tim Brown, Heisman Trophy Winner, NFL 1990s All-Decade Team, and AFC Champion "Three academics from Marquette University, one of whom (Koonce) is a former NFL player, apply some sociological techniques to analyzing the situations of ex-NFL players...[T]he information and insights engage in a rousing race for the end zone." -Kirkus "Is There Life After Football? offers fresh and insightful answers to a long-standing, difficult question, namely why some former NFL players languish while others thrive. The authors eschew oft-made assumptions and convenient explanations in favor of original, probing analysis based on thorough research and scores of interviews. Any examination of football, its joys, its ills, and the fate of its retired players would be incomplete without reading *Is There Life After Football?*" -N. Jeremi Duru, author of *Advancing the Ball* "Entering the so-called real world after years in the bubble of special treatment and privilege is the focus of the authors' study, which draws on the experiences of many ex-NFLers, including co-author George Koonce, who spent nearly a decade with the Green Bay Packers." -*Christian Science Monitor* "A timely exploration that will be of interest to football fans looking to better understand the complex culture of the NFL." -Booklist "Is There Life After Football? provides a sobering and insightful view of this transition through the personal anecdotes of Koonce and the research of Holstein and Jones. Most jarring is Koonce's admission of a reckless act at the end of his career...the authors do a great job of distilling difficult material into a digestible form. It's also a treat to read for anyone who enjoyed watching those plucky Packers of the 1990s." -*Ensuring Chapters* "The trio of authors gives readers a detailed explanation complemented by personal accounts from Koonce and other former players, coaches, and wives about how lonely life outside the locker room and off the football field can be for NFL exes." -Pulse Magazine

James A. Holstein is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social and Cultural Sciences at Marquette University. He is the author, with Jaber F. Gubrium, of *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in the Postmodern World*. Richard S. Jones is Professor of Sociology and Faculty Athletics Representative at Marquette University. He is the author of *Doing Time: Prison Experience and*

Identity with Thomas J. Schmid. George E. Koonce, Jr. played professional football for a decade, the majority of those years with the Green Bay Packers, with whom he won the Super Bowl XXXI title. After the NFL he held positions as Senior Associate Athletic Director and Director of Development at Marquette University, Athletic Director at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Director of Player Development for the Packers, and Special Assistant to the Athletic Director at East Carolina University. Dr. Koonce is currently Vice President of Advancement at Marian University.

Former Green Bay Packer player George Koonce with James A. Holstein and Richard S Jones writes about the TRUE life of a Professional NFL players career starting with High School, College and up to the NFL until they are finished. Is there such a thing as "retirement" for the NFL pro's? This is an amazing, interesting and many times disturbing story of the REAL LIFE of an NFL player. Dr. George Koonce, writes about his experiences and how difficult it is to put the pads away, voluntarily or involuntarily and go out into the real, normal world, after having lived in the NFL bubble for years. The camaraderie, the injuries, the special treatments, the grueling schedules, the loss of self during their playing years, then having to become regular people once it's over. There are many interviews with other players, coaches, and wives. Some giving their names, others wishing to stay anonymous. I am a HUGE football fan and a Packer fan and had no idea what goes on in the NFL, the struggles players have when their career is over. I feel every parent of a son in sports, or a teenage boy should definitely read this book. I am honored to say Dr. Koonce works where I work and I have the greatest respect and admiration for him. NOTE: A lot of statistics and at times I felt I needed a dictionary to follow with all the big words from Holstein and Jones. I would give this book more than 5 stars if I could.

Great book! Very honest look at the life of a football player from a very humble man, George Koonce. This book takes you from high school, through the college experience, the NFL career, and what may come of a post NFL career. The book takes accounts not only from George Koonce's NFL career and post football career, but various other players who have had very different lives after football: some doing well in their 2nd career while some not adjusting, some are wealthy and some are broke, and some are seriously injured. This book runs the entire gambit. Excellent read! Highly recommend it!

This is a comprehensive review of the realities of the sport of American football. Aside from the rush of fan enthusiasm, it takes a stretch to convince someone that the sport is, or has been, good for the

American "way of life." This presentation is unique as it combines stringent academic research methods with insider incites quoted from one of the co-authors along with many other players and former players. Th theme of the presentation is that American football makes a few owners very rich and a whole lot more players injured and inancially unsuccessfull. Any parent seeking to balance the risks with rewards or benefits of their child playing American footbal needs to read this book. Those considering an athletic coaching career need to read this book before they pick their specialty sport. All sports have their positives and negatives. One must conclude that American football is a negative and should be chosen after other sports that could be just as enjoyable to watch and play, but not as detrimental to those who play it.

Very informative narrative describing the insides of the nfl player's bubble and how the ends of a career are dealt with. Eye opening.

It was OK. Some interesting insight, but overall, just not that compelling.

AWSOME with a lot of knowledgeable information.

Great book!

Awesome read!

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