



League of Denial: The NFL, Concussions, and the Battle for Truth

By Mark Fainaru-Wada, Steve Fainaru

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“PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS DO NOT SUSTAIN FREQUENT REPETITIVE BLOWS TO THE BRAIN ON A REGULAR BASIS.”

So concluded the National Football League in a December 2005 scientific paper on concussions in America's most popular sport. That judgment, implausible even to a casual fan, also contradicted the opinion of a growing cadre of neuroscientists who worked in vain to convince the NFL that it was facing a deadly new scourge: A chronic brain disease that was driving an alarming number of players -- including some of the all-time greats -- to madness.

League of Denial reveals how the NFL, over a period of nearly two decades, sought to cover up and deny mounting evidence of the connection between football and brain damage.

Comprehensively, and for the first time, award-winning ESPN investigative reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Steve Fainaru tell the story of a public health crisis that emerged from the playing fields of our 21st century pastime. Everyone knew that football is violent and dangerous. But what the players who built the NFL into a \$10 billion industry didn't know – and what the league sought to shield from them – is that no amount of padding could protect the human brain from the force generated by modern football; that the very essence of the game could be exposing these players to brain damage.

In a fast-paced narrative that moves between the NFL trenches, America's research labs and the boardrooms where the NFL went to war against science, *League of Denial* examines how the league used its power and resources to attack independent scientists and elevate its own flawed research -- a campaign with echoes of Big Tobacco's fight to deny the connection between smoking and lung cancer. It chronicles the tragic fates of players like Hall of Fame Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster, who was so disturbed at the time of his death he fantasized about shooting NFL executives; and former Chargers great Junior Seau, whose diseased brain became the target of an unseemly scientific battle between researchers and the NFL. Based on exclusive interviews, previously undisclosed documents and private emails, this is the story of what the NFL knew and when it knew it – questions at the heart of crisis that threatens football, from the highest levels all the way down to Pop Warner.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Journalistically bruising." -- **Peter King**

"It is meticulously researched, artfully structured, engaging and well written... this is an informative, intriguing and sobering book about power and control. I recommend it strongly." - **Nate Jackson, The Washington Post**

"Mark Fainaru-Wada and Steve Fainaru's book 'League of Denial' should be required reading in secondary schools for all athletes. Those of us outside the lines will be wiser, as well, for having invested just a few hours to read it." - **Tim Cowlishaw, Dallas Morning News**

"Meticulously documented and endlessly chilling." - **The New York Times**

"'League of Denial' may turn out to be the most influential sports-related book of our time." -**The Boston Globe, Best Sports Books of 2013**

About the Author

Mark Fainaru-Wada is an investigative reporter for ESPN. With his colleague Lance Williams, he co-authored the New York Times best-seller "Game of Shadows -- Barry Bonds, BALCO and the Steroids Scandal That Rocked Professional Sports." He lives in Petaluma, California, with his wife Nicole, son Max and daughter Ella.

Steve Fainaru is an investigative reporter for ESPN. While covering the Iraq war for the *Washington Post*, he received the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for his investigation into the U.S. military's reliance on private security contractors. He lives in Berkeley, California, with his wife Maureen Fan, and son Will.

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