

TIM TEBOW

YOUNG
READER'S
EDITION

SNEAK
PEEK



SAMPLE
ONLY

SHAKEN

FIGHTING TO STAND STRONG NO MATTER WHAT COMES YOUR WAY

WITH A. J. GREGORY

Praise for
Shaken

“Tim Tebow is not an athlete—*athlete* is what Tim fills in on his tax return. That does not begin to tell the story of who he is. Tim is a role model, an inspiration to those who have a dream and are willing to accept life as a journey full of ups and downs.”

—JON BON JOVI, singer-songwriter

“*Shaken* shows us a side of Tim Tebow that we’ve never gotten to see before. In this book, Tim comes alongside his reader and says, ‘I’ve been there too,’ and proceeds to show us how God is faithful even when our entire lives feel shaken to the core.”

—MARK BATTERSON, pastor and *New York Times*
best-selling author of *The Circle Maker*

“Tim is a remarkable example of one who combines strength and boldness with kindness and compassion, and I’m always encouraged to hear of how he is using his tremendous platform to share the love and truth of our Lord with those who need it most.”

—RAVI ZACHARIAS, apologist, author, and president
of RZIM

“Tim has always inspired me with his dedication to grow and improve in all aspects of life, especially his faith. With this book, Tim encourages readers to keep moving and stay strong while battling life’s obstacles.”

—CAM NEWTON, quarterback for the Carolina Panthers

“Whether or not you’ve followed Tim’s career, *Shaken* speaks to something we’ve all had to deal with—trusting God when the plans for our lives don’t work out as we expected. Tim shares his journey from the Broncos to the Jets to the Patriots and beyond with refreshing honesty. He comes alongside us as a friend and gives us hope for the days our lives take an unexpected turn. I am so grateful to call Tim my friend; his life and passion constantly inspire me! Whatever Tim does he does with all his heart, and this book reflects that incredible commitment! I love Tim, and by the end of this book, you will too!”

—JUDAH SMITH, lead pastor of the City Church and *New York Times* best-selling author of *Jesus Is _____*.

“*Shaken* is everyone’s story. All of us know what it is to experience the best of days and the lowest of days. For Tim, he’s lived those days in public. I have the privilege to call Tim my friend and can tell you that with him, what you see is what you get, which seems rare these days! I appreciate how real and raw Tim is with his own struggles. In *Shaken* you will find great encouragement for your own life and faith.”

—CHRIS TOMLIN, worship leader and songwriter

SHAKEN

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BOOKS BY TIM TEBOW

Through My Eyes

Shaken

Shaken Bible Study

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Know Who You Are. Live Like It Matters.

TIM TEBOW

WITH A.J. GREGORY

YOUNG READER'S EDITION

SHAKEN

**FIGHTING TO STAND STRONG
NO MATTER WHAT COMES YOUR WAY**



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SHAKEN: YOUNG READER'S EDITION

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This work is based on *Shaken* by Tim Tebow, first published in hardcover by WaterBrook in 2016. *Shaken* copyright © 2016 by Timothy R. Tebow.

Hardcover ISBN 978-0-7352-8996-3

eBook ISBN 978-0-7352-8997-0

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Cover design by Kristopher K. Orr; cover photography by Bryan Soderlind

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Tebow, Tim, 1987– author.

Title: Shaken : fighting to stand strong no matter what comes your way/ Tim Tebow, with AJ Gregory.

Description: Young Reader's Edition. | Colorado Springs, Colorado : WaterBrook, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017016085 | ISBN 9780735289963 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780735289970 (electronic : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Identity (Psychology)—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Success—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Students—Religious life.

Classification: LCC BV4509.5 .T43 2017 | DDC 248.4—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017016085>

Printed in the United States of America

2017—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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To the two best things in my life:

Jesus, the greatest gift I ever received.

My family. The thing about family is that you don't get to pick them. But if I could, I'd choose every one of you. I love you, Mom, Dad, Christy, Katie, Robby, and Peter!

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INTRODUCTION

I'm grateful for the life experiences I've had—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sure, I've had my ups and downs. As I've done things a little bit differently, the world has tried to force me onto a roller coaster of identities. It has tried to tell me who I am based on my circumstances.

Was my identity found in the highs when I won the Heisman Trophy or later when the Denver Broncos were making a playoff run? No. Was my identity found when, a year later, I was cut from the team? No.

When I'm on top of my game, it seems everyone loves and respects me. But when I'm at the bottom of the heap, I get criticized and torn down. You know what I've learned through all this? How important it is not to allow either the highs or the lows in life to determine who you are.

It's tempting to define ourselves or to measure our worth by what we see on the outside—by how we look, by how athletic we are, by

how much money we have, by what others say about us. The list is long.

Think about this. Who are you when everything is going great—when you're acing your classes, when you're winning the games, when

**Sometimes it takes
a challenging time
to really find out
who you are.**

you're part of the "in" crowd, when your home life is picture perfect? Now, think about who you are when your world is shaken—when you're barely passing your exams, when you don't make the team, when your parents are fighting like crazy, when your boyfriend or girlfriend just

broke up with you, when you just can't push that sadness away. Sometimes it takes a challenging time to really find out who you are.

While many know about my career highs, few know the details about the lows. Like having to learn that God's plans are better and bigger than mine. Or feeling torn about the future. Or dealing with my dreams being shattered after getting cut from three NFL teams. I admit, writing this book hasn't been easy. It was tough to relive some painful moments. But I'm so grateful to share with you what I've learned: I've realized that who I am has nothing to do with wins or losses, praise or rejection. It has to do with whose I am—whom I belong to. Knowing this, I can live out what a king from ancient Israel wrote in Psalm 16:8:

I have set the LORD continually before me;

Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

INTRODUCTION

In this book I share parts of my personal life and football journey in the NFL. But it's not just about my story. It's about the truth I've discovered along the way. This is what's important. And it's also about some amazing people I've been inspired by in life, as well as through the Tim Tebow Foundation's W15H (pronounced "wish") outreach program. I created W15H to help bring faith, hope, and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need. Funny, the kids we serve have given those very things to me. While I wish I could tell you about every single child and family I've met who have inspired me, I'm excited to be able to share a few stories with you.

Here's what you can expect to find in this book. In the first seven chapters, I talk about some of the lows I've experienced and the lessons I've learned through that time. Like what it means to stay grounded in the face of doubt and fear, why others matter, and how God has created us to be unique, not "normal."

I know that when I'm settled in my identity, I live at my best.

The last three chapters focus on how we can make a difference in our faith walk. Because life's not just about us, right? When we are grounded in whose we are, we not only can handle the storms that come but can also live bigger and influence others for God's greater plan. We can use our stories, our talents, and our willingness to help others in their own stories.

Look, I'm not perfect. I'm on a faith journey just like you are. I

SHAKEN

have good days. I have bad days. Sometimes I get it right. Other days I struggle. But I know that when I'm settled in my identity, I live at my best.

I pray that reading this book strengthens your faith, gives you hope, and shines light on your dark places. My prayer is that after reading this book, you can walk away inspired. That you'll be armed with courage, ready to tackle life and make a difference.

1

CUT

**We must accept finite disappointment,
but we must never lose infinite hope.**

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The locker room felt grim. You could just feel the tension. Guys stood in front of giant wooden lockers. On hooks and shoved in corners were more than just sweaty shorts and worn helmets. More than stuff. My New England Patriots teammates were staring at signs of shattered plans. Failure. Disappointment.

It was late August, time for roster cuts. NFL teams start out with ninety guys. By the end of the last week of the preseason, the number drops down to fifty-three. During those seven days, you can't help but feel on edge. Especially as you walk into the locker room after a workout and from the corner of your eye see a buddy that you trained and worked so hard with. Now he's glum, black trash bags in hand. It was like that all day.

One by one, a handful of my teammates started cleaning out their lockers. Told to go home. That it was over. Some masked the disappointment they felt. With others, it was written all over their faces.

On one hand, I was relieved. It wasn't me getting called into a

conference room and then having to dump protein shakes, deodorant, and cleats into a noisy trash bag. On the other hand, I felt for these guys. They were my friends. And now, they weren't on the team anymore.

I remember clapping one guy on the shoulder and saying, "Hey, man. God's got a plan. He's got this." To another, I gave a bear hug, saying nothing.

As the day went on, I thought about my standing on the team. I felt like I had gotten more comfortable with my performance. We had just beaten the New York Giants 28–20 the night before, August 29, 2013. In this preseason finale, I had finished 6 of 11 in passing for 91 yards with two touchdowns. Yeah, maybe I didn't do my best, but I was just starting to click with the team.

And then, sucker punch.

It was my turn.

I didn't see it coming. Maybe because I was one of the last players to get cut.

I spent that Friday training in the Patriots facilities at Gillette Stadium. As I worked out, I felt a bit off. In the back of my mind, I was waiting for someone to pop his head into that room and call me into a meeting. But no one came. That helped to take some of the pressure off.

After my workout, I walked into the locker room. Seeing team-

mate after teammate getting released made me tense up again. I said goodbye to the guys while anxiously glancing over my shoulder. Waiting for something to happen. Maybe someone to call me into an office. Maybe a text. But nothing. A part of me began to think I was safe. I remember earlier that day talking to Robert Kraft, the owner of the Patriots. I liked and respected this man. He told me he was looking forward to seeing me at a barbeque he was hosting for the team the next day. I took his words as a good sign.

By the time I left the building, I felt okay. And I couldn't wait to hang out with my brother Robby and my longtime friends Bryan and Erik. I love these guys. We always have a ton of fun together.

To help distract me, the four of us hit a movie theater nearby. And after wasting an hour and a half of our lives watching a terribly boring flick, we parted ways. Erik and Bryan headed to the airport to fly home to Jacksonville as Robby and I headed back to the hotel room. By the time I went to bed, I still hadn't heard from Coach Bill Belichick or his staff.

I woke up the next morning thinking, *Phew! I made it!* Then, my phone beeped. A text message from Coach.

"Timmy, will you please come in?"

I stared at those six words for a minute. The feeling of security began to shatter.

I drove to the stadium, trying to not think so much. Whatever was going to happen was going to happen. It was that simple. But that didn't make it easy to accept.

I tried to focus as I pushed open the glass front doors. The place

was practically empty. Most of the team was headed to or already at Mr. Kraft's barbecue, which I still had planned to attend. I kept calm as I walked down the gray hallway. My flip-flops flapped noisily on the tiled floor. When Coach Belichick's serious-faced assistant led me to the conference room, I knew. In an instant.

Enter the sucker punch.

The room was bare. Just a dark wooden rectangular table and a few chairs. There may have been a window or even a tap-dancing flamingo in the corner, but I wouldn't have noticed. My eyes were laser focused on the two men I was certain were going to change my future.

**Their faces were
matter-of-fact.
No emotion.**

Coach Belichick sat in a chair on the opposite side of the table. Coach Josh McDaniels, who had drafted me to the Denver Broncos three and a half years earlier, stood in a nearby corner to his left. Someone waved his hand for me to sit. Their faces were matter-of-fact. No emotion.

While I can't remember who spoke first or what he said, I think Coach Belichick broke the silence by saying, "Good job on the last game, Timmy."

I nodded, staying quiet. My relationship with Coach Belichick had been good since my Gator days. He would watch me train, encourage me. I liked the guy. And I wanted to play for him. I wanted to work hard and prove I was the right choice.

"It's not the right fit," Coach Belichick said.

My stomach churned. I felt disappointed. I felt I had let myself

down. I didn't believe I performed as well in practice or the preseason as I could have, but I was getting better. I had been stoked about getting to learn and train under Tom Brady, one of the best quarterbacks of all time. I planned on using that experience to become one of the best quarterbacks of all time, too. At the beginning of training camp, I put a lot of pressure on myself to be like Tom and train like Tom, but then I realized it wasn't about being Tom. It was about being me and doing my best. But all this didn't matter. My effort wasn't enough.

Honestly, it hurt. I had hoped Coaches Belichick and McDaniels would give me a chance. They were some of my biggest supporters. If they didn't believe in me, who would?

The meeting lasted ten, maybe fifteen minutes. I listened, not for a second taking my eyes off these two men. Though I felt they were sincere and truly sorry about letting me go, I didn't get any clear answers. They kept talking in circles.

As Coach Belichick said a few more things, I couldn't help but wonder, *Why wasn't I enough? Should I have trained differently? Should I have spent more time studying? Or more time throwing? Am I done for good?*

This wasn't the first time I was let go from an NFL team. In the spring of 2012, I was traded from the Broncos to the New York Jets. That move felt like a kind of betrayal. A year later, the Jets let me go. I didn't like this pattern.

As I nodded, still looking at these two men square in the eyes, I shifted my thoughts toward God. The One I believed had led me to

New England. *I thought this was going somewhere special! I thought this was a plan You designed for me. If that was true, then why, God, why is this thing crashing and burning?*

Then the meeting was over.

I gave Coach Belichick and Coach McDaniels hugs. I wished them and their families well. I genuinely meant what I said. I deeply respected these two men. They are great at what they do. And I didn't blame them in the least.

I blamed myself.

As I stepped out into the empty hallway that would lead me for the last time to the Patriots locker room and my very own black garbage bags, my heart sank. *You could have, you should have done more, Timmy. Why didn't you push harder? Train better? Work out longer?*

I pictured the thousands of letters, cards, and e-mails I had received from kids who looked up to me and had rooted for me. I had failed them. Again. I felt so embarrassed.

Thankfully the locker room was nearly empty, quiet. I grabbed a few garbage bags and stood in front of my locker, feeling like I was going to throw up. *Is this it? Will I ever wear an NFL uniform again?*

I stared at the bottles and jars of nutritional supplements that cluttered a shelf. Green fuel, protein shakes, vitamins, antioxidants—all the things that were supposed to help me get stronger, faster, better. *Dang, I thought, they were no help at all.*

I stared straight at the Patriots gear. A uniform I was proud to

wear, that I'd never put on again. In a blur, I grabbed some of my personal stuff and chucked the items one by one into a trash bag. As I tossed in a pair of running shoes, I knew it wouldn't be long before millions of Americans would hear the news. I'd have to make a statement soon and wanted to do it right. I wanted to say—and mean it with all my heart—that I was grateful to God and to the Patriots for the opportunity.

In that moment, it wasn't easy. I knew God hadn't left me. I knew He still had a plan for my life. I knew He still had a purpose. And though my foundation in Him was solid, much of what rested on top of that was shaken. I love what boxer Mike Tyson said, something like "Everyone's got a plan until they get punched in the face." That's just what it felt like for me.

In that moment, it wasn't easy. I knew God hadn't left me.

A few teammates and coaches were there to say goodbye. They were nice and supportive, wishing me the best of luck. I can't tell you how much time had passed, but by the time I started filling my second garbage bag, I was over it. I took what I could and left the Patriots equipment in the locker. Then I walked out of the building, giving more hugs and saying thank-yous to the few people I passed on the way.

The summer sun felt warm on my face. The air was calm and still. Walking toward my rental SUV, which was parked in the middle of a lifeless parking lot, I remembered the last game I had played for the Broncos. On January 14, 2012, the Patriots killed us 45–10

in the second round of the AFC Championship playoffs. I didn't know it at the time, but during the game, I had broken my collarbone and second rib. As I climbed into the SUV, now a year and a half later, I slammed the door shut and thought, *This is the second time I'm leaving Gillette Stadium—broken.*

I sat for a minute, staring out the windshield. *Did that really just happen? God, I thought we were in this together! I thought we had a plan, a purpose! We were supposed to do some great things here!*

On and on these split-second thoughts blasted their way through my brain. Finally, I unfroze.

I picked up my phone and called my brother Robby, or my friend Erik, maybe both. I can't remember. But they kindly organized an immediate group call with my "circle of trust." My family (Mom and Dad, sisters Christy and Katie, brothers Robby and Peter) and a few close friends rounded out this amazing bunch. I needed their support, but I also wanted to tell those closest to me the news in one shot. I'm not a big fan of repeating myself, especially when it's bad news.

As I made the fifteen-minute drive through the back roads to the hotel, I told the people I love most that the Patriots let me go. They immediately began to encourage and pray for me.

"I'm so sorry, Timmy."

"This is not over."

"God's got a plan."

And then together, we worked our way through what I would post on social media. How do you respond publicly to such a personal loss? After much thought, I tweeted on August 31, 2013, 12:16 p.m.:

CUT

I would like to thank Mr. Kraft, Coach Belichick, Coach McDaniels and the entire Patriots organization for giving me the opportunity to be a part of such a classy organization. I pray for nothing but the best for you all. I will remain in relentless pursuit of continuing my lifelong dream of being an NFL quarterback. 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

I was trying to mean every word. I really was. I knew in my heart it was true, but my emotions were working hard to get in the way of the truth.

That afternoon, I didn't have the heart to face a bunch of reporters or disappointed fans who were sure to flood the airport. So a friend kindly offered to send a private plane that was already nearby and fly me to Jacksonville. I planned to spend the rest of the day at Bryan's house with Robby. I had nowhere else to go. I'd been living in hotel rooms and rented apartments for the last few years. In fact, most of my stuff was in storage from the last cut.

Once at Bryan's, I knew I wouldn't be able to leave for a while. I'd be blasted by media and others about getting cut. People were already talking about it all over the Internet. Some offered support.

Others dished out hate. It seemed everyone had something to say. One sports commentator said I failed at a great opportunity. Another article said no NFL team wanted me. And then there were the thousands upon thousands of social media comments, tweets, and posts that followed each headline.

As I walked through the front door of Bryan's beautiful home, I remembered when I walked through these same doors in April 2010. The house was packed with family and close friends who munched on chicken fingers and mac and cheese while the seventy-fifth NFL draft blared on a large flat-screen TV. My brothers and I had watched the draft together at Bryan's house for years. This was the first time we were waiting to hear my name.

Moments before the start of my professional football career was announced to the world, I took a call in Bryan's home office. It was the Denver Broncos coach, Josh McDaniels. The team was about to choose me. A minute or two later, I became a Bronco.

Now three and a half years later, I walked into that same house. But everything was different. There was no party. No cheering. No high fives. And definitely no chicken fingers or mac and cheese.

I gave Bryan's wife a hug. She looked at me with tears in her eyes. Not knowing what else to say, she whispered in my ear, "We love you, Timmy." Bryan, Robby, and I crashed in Bryan's room. Remote control in hand, I flipped to the obvious choice—football. Watching the game, especially college football, brings me crazy joy. It's always been that way.

But that night, I realized my heart wasn't in it. It was the first

and only time I couldn't stomach watching football. I'm sure it didn't help that during every game and on every sports channel, the news ticker kept running across the bottom of the screen like a broken record: "Tebow gets released from the Patriots."

"Hey, Bryan," I said. "Can you please find something else to watch?"

"Sure, man." He nodded knowingly and started channel surfing. Hundreds of shows and movies, and nothing to watch. First-world problems right there.

We finally settled on some movie. Though I tried not to think or replay the conversation with my former coaches a thousand times in my head, it was hard not to. My mind and heart were elsewhere. While the film ran on, and with Bryan to my right and Robby to my left, I struggled in my heart.

What do you do when your world is shaken? What do you do when your plans fall to pieces? What do you do when life is going in a direction you do not want it to go? Better yet, what do you hold on to? I knew in that moment, I had to hold on to truth. It was the only solid ground I had. I had to remember what God said.

And I would have to do this over and over and over again.

I brought to mind Bible verses that I was taught growing up and that I've held on to over the years. Like Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a

**What do you do
when your world
is shaken?**

future and a hope'” (NLT). And Psalm 56:3: “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.”

I remembered the things my mom had always said to encourage me when I was down, like “God has big plans for you, Timmy. Just wait on Him.”

It was late when the movie ended. I'll never forget what happened when the ending credits rolled. Robby got up to return a phone call. Bryan got up to say good night to his wife. In other words, life was normal for them. Nothing had changed. But everything had for me.

I sat on the edge of the bed. As I watched Bryan's cockapoo run around in wild figure eights, it felt like my world had exploded.

What am I going to do? What am I going to be?

I don't put a lot of chips in different bags. I was committed to a career as a quarterback in the NFL. Period. End of story.

I prayed with a mix of faith and doubt weaving between my words. *God, I don't know what's happening. And I don't have a clue what You are doing. But I believe You have me here for a reason. I believe You've got a plan. I know this is not the end of my story. I may not be excited about what You have in mind, but I'm in this with You. Whatever happens, I'm in.*

Though I was disappointed, I was trying so hard to bulk up my confidence. Not in myself. Not in my athletic abilities. I was drawing inner strength in the One I belong to. In the One who created me. In the One who loves me beyond all love.

Sometime that night I got on the phone with one of my agents.

A few things happened when we talked. “Timmy, a bunch of teams are calling and hoping you’ll play for them,” he started, before rattling off the names of this one and that one. I was starting to get my hopes up.

My agent continued, “So this one wants you to play tight end. That one wants you as a halfback . . .” His voice trailed off. No mention of quarterback.

While every offer he told me about had really big selling points—and I was grateful for the offers—I wasn’t crazy about any of them. Look, I wasn’t being arrogant. I wanted to keep fighting for what I *was* crazy about. I wanted to fight for what I believed in. Since I was six years old, one of my dreams was to be an NFL quarterback. I didn’t want to play professional football just to make a lot of money or to get famous. I wanted to pursue my passion of playing as a quarterback. To me, that was worth fighting for more than just making it in the NFL. I wanted to strive for my dream, not let others define me or my future.

My agent also gave me strict orders to lie low. The biggest distraction to being on a team is attracting a media circus, something I’ve been told I tend to do. This meant saying no to a lot of opportunities. Well, I wasn’t going to sit around all day and do nothing.

I remembered Tom Brady once telling me about a guy named Tom House. House is a fierce trainer who tutors athletes on mechanics and also pitched in the baseball major leagues for eight years. I had met House before. The guy was nuts—in a good way. I knew I needed him.

Sometime before the call from my agent, and even during it, I made a choice not to quit. Not to complain. Not to let others define me. And not to stay stuck in disappointment or regret. Believe me when I tell you, I wanted to be angry! But I had to go back to the place of trusting God.

So I made the choice, on purpose, to put in the hard work of training while lying low. I was going to work with House, the best of

I continually made the choice to trust God with the plan while doing my part and putting in the work.

the best. I knew my effort might not pay off in the way I wanted. I knew I might not make it in the NFL as a quarterback. But no one in the world was ever going to outwork me. I didn't know exactly what lay ahead, but I continually made the choice to trust God with the plan while doing

my part and putting in the work. It wasn't easy. And I didn't necessarily feel good about it. But I did it.

I can't tell you how many people around me told me to take some time off. But taking a break wasn't in my vocabulary or my mind-set. Oh sure, in theory, it sounded awesome. I would have loved to rest and just hang out with my family. But instead of doing what I wanted to do, I chose to work. I chose to train. I chose to keep going. I chose to fight tooth and nail for my dream.

Two days after that call with my agent, I was in Los Angeles. I'd stay there for about eighteen months, training with Tom House at the University of Southern California. I'd live in someone's spare

CUT

bedroom. I'd walk past people who would come up to me, with pity, and say, "I'm sorry." Others would simply ask for a picture or an autograph. And then there were those who would tell me their ideas of what I should have done or shouldn't have done and what I should do now with my life.

But I'm getting ahead of things.

That night, after Robby walked out to make a phone call and Bryan went to see his wife, and as I was fighting for my future, I couldn't avoid the ugly reality.

I had no job. No car. No home.

I'd let down the people who looked up to me.

No team wanted me to do something I'd dreamed of doing since I was a little boy.

What exactly did the future hold?

I didn't have a clue.